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THE

PULPIT COMMENTARY,

EDITED BY THE

REV. CANON H. D. M. SPENCE, M.A.,

VICAR AND RURAL DEAN OF ST. PANCRAE, AND EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD
BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER AND BRISTOL;

AND BY THE

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

WITH

INTRODUCTIONS

BY THE

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HEBREWS.

Exposition

BY REV. J. BARMBY, B.D.,

VICAR OF PITTINGTON.

Homiletics

BY REV. C. JERDAN, M.A., LL.B.

Homilies by Various Authors.

REV. W. JONES.
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THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE HEBREWS.

INTRODUCTION.

I. THE DATE OF THE EPISTLE.

THOUGH the Epistle to the Hebrews was not in all quarters received unreservedly into the canon from the first, and though its authorship is still uncertain, yet none can reasonably doubt its early origin in the later period of the apostolic age. The evidence is both internal and external. The frequent allusions in it to Judaism, with its ritual, as a still existing system, are such as to render highly improbable any date after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, A.D. 70. It is true that the mere use of verbs in the present with reference to the temple services would not be in itself conclusive; for this usage continued after the destruction of the temple, being found in Josephus, 'Ant.' iii. 9, 10; in Barnab., 7, etc.; in 'Epist. ad Diogn.' 8; in the Talmud; and in the Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians (see Bishop Lightfoot's note on ch. xli. of that epistle). But we observe, further, the pervading tone of warning to the readers against being drawn back into Judaism, as though they were still surrounded by their old associations, and the total absence of reference to any breaking up of the ancient polity, such as might have been certainly expected if the event had taken place. Thus we may safely take the above date, A.D. 70, as a *terminus ad quem*, being only two years after the martyrdom of St. Paul, and many before the death of St. John. Strong also is the external evidence of an early date. Clement of Rome, about whom there can be no reasonable doubt that he was a disciple of the apostles and that he superintended the Church of Rome not long at least after St. Peter and St. Paul had suffered, and whose first Epistle to the Corinthians is undeniably genuine, uses language in that epistle which proves his acquaintance with the Epistle to the Hebrews. Of his quotations, or references, more will be said below under the head of "Canonicity." Then the Peshito, or Syriac Version of the New Testament, which is universally assigned

to the most remote Christian antiquity, includes this Epistle. Further, Clement of Alexandria (who presided over the catechetical school there at the close of the second century) not only himself mentions it, and quotes it often as St. Paul's, but speaks also of his own master and predecessor, Pantænus, having expressed his views about it: "as the blessed presbyter used to say," etc. (Eusebius, vi. 14, quoting from Clement's 'Hypotyposes'). Of the testimony of the Alexandrian Fathers more will be said under the head of "Authorship." Enough now for our present purpose to observe that the Epistle is hereby proved to have been well known and received in the Alexandrian Church in the time of Pantænus, who takes us up very close to the apostolic age; and though the learned there, as will be seen, came afterwards to question St. Paul's direct authorship, yet its antiquity was never doubted.

While internal evidence, as above noticed, seems to preclude any date later than A.D. 70, so does it, on the other hand, any very much earlier. For the readers are addressed as members of a Church of old standing: they are reminded of "the former days," when they had been at first "illuminated," and of persecution endured in the past; sufficient time had elapsed for them to show serious signs of wavering from their early steadfastness; and their "leaders, who had spoken to them the Word of God," had already passed away, being referred to in terms that suggest the idea of martyrdom (ch. xiii. 7). If we could be sure of an allusion here, among others, to James the Just (called "Bishop of Jerusalem,"¹ and the acknowledged leader of the Hebrew Christians), we should have a definite *terminus a quo* in A.D. 62, at the Passover of which year, according to Josephus and Eusebius, James was martyred. This allusion cannot, however, be more than a probability. All we can allege confidently is that the Epistle, from its contents, must have been written a considerable number of years after the community addressed had received the faith, and hence, if during St. Paul's life, not long before its close. Some time between A.D. 62 and 70 would very well suit the conditions.

II. THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE EPISTLE.

Be it observed, in the first place, that the Epistle is itself anonymous. The writer never mentions his own name or intimates who he is. Hence the questions of authorship and of canonicity may, in this case, be kept distinct. This could not be in the case of any of St. Paul's undoubted Epistles, in all of which he gives his own name and designation, and often alludes in detail to his circumstances at the time of writing and his relations to the persons addressed. In such cases denial of the alleged authorship would involve denial of the writing being what it professes to be, and

¹ See Epiphanius ('Hæres.' lxxviii.); Chrysostom ('Hom.' xl., in 1 Cor. vii.); Proclus ('De Trad. Div. Liturg. '); Photius ('Ep.' 157); Eusebius ('Hist. Eccl.' ii. 23); Clem. Alex. ('Hypotyposes,' bk. vi., apud Eusebius, 'Hist. Eccl.' ii. 1).

hence of its claim to be included in the canon as genuine and authoritative. But it is not so in the case before us. Nor does deference to the judgment or consentient traditions of the Church require us to conclude St. Paul to have been the author. The very title, "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews," is not ancient; the earlier title was simply *Πρὸς Ἑβραίους*. So in all the most ancient manuscripts, and so referred to by Origen, quoted by Eusebius ('Hist. Eocl.' vi. 25), and, though the tradition of St. Paul's authorship was undoubtedly a very early one, yet it was not in primitive times, any more than in our own, considered conclusive by those who were competent to judge, including Fathers of the highest repute from the second century downwards.

The earliest known allusion to the authorship of the Epistle is that of Clement of Alexandria, already referred to as having often quoted it in his extant works, spoken of it himself, and recorded something that Pantænus before him had said of it. We are indebted to Eusebius for the preservation of this interesting reference to the 'Hypotyposes' of Clement:—"In the 'Hypotyposes,' to speak briefly, he (i.e. Clemens Alexandrinus) has given a compressed account of the whole testamentary Scripture, not omitting even the disputed books; I mean the Epistle of Jude and the rest of the catholic Epistles, and that of Barnabas, and the so-called Apocalypse of Peter. And as to the Epistle to the Hebrews, he says that it is Paul's, but that it was written to the Hebrews in the Hebrew language, and that Luke translated it carefully and published it to the Greeks; that consequently there is found the same colour, with regard to style, in this Epistle and in the Acts; but that it is not prefaced by 'Paul the apostle' with good reason; 'for' (says he) 'as he was sending it to the Hebrews, who had conceived a prejudice against him and suspected him, he very wisely did not repel them at the beginning by appending his name.' Then he goes on to say, 'But,' as the blessed presbyter before now used to say, 'since the Lord was sent to the Hebrews, as being the Apostle of the Almighty, Paul, out of modesty, as having been sent to the Gentiles, does not inscribe himself apostle of the Hebrews, both because of the honour due to the Lord, and because of its being a work of supererogation that he wrote also to the Hebrews, being herald and apostle of the Gentiles'" (Eusebius, 'Hist. Eocl.' vi. 14).¹

"The blessed presbyter" referred to may be concluded to have been Pantænus, to whose teaching Clement acknowledged himself to have been especially indebted: "who also in the 'Hypotyposes,' which he composed, makes mention by name of Pantænus as his master" (Eusebius, 'Hist. Eocl.' v. 11; cf. vi. 13). Also in his 'Stromates' (i. § 11) Clement, speaking of his various teachers in various places, says that he found at last in Egypt the true master for whom he had before sought in vain, meaning undoubtedly this same Pantænus, whom Eusebius, speaking of the time of Commodus (A.D. 180—192), mentions as the leading teacher at Alexandria ('Hist.

¹ The later Greek Fathers, after St. Paul had come to be accepted as the writer, give generally this reason for the absence of his name (see 'Catena,' edit. Cramer)

Eccl., v. 10). Jerome also ('In Catal.,' 36) speaks of Pantænus thus: "Pantænus, stoicæ sectæ philosophus, juxta quandam veterem in Alexandria consuetudinem, ubi a Marco Evangelista semper ecclesiastici fuere doctores, tantæ prudentiæ et eruditionis tam in Scripturis divinis, quam in sæculari literatura, fuit, ut in Indiam quoque . . . mitteretur." It would appear, then, that Clement, on coming to Alexandria, found Pantænus presiding over the famous catechetical school there, whom, according to Eusebius and others, he succeeded in his office. The period of Clement's presidency having been circ. A.D. 190—203, it thus is evident that, certainly not long after the middle of the second century, the Epistle to the Hebrews was received in the Alexandrian Church as one of St. Paul's; and of course the presumption is that it had been handed down as such from a much earlier date (cf. Origen's words, quoted below, about "the ancients" having so transmitted it). This distinct early tradition is plainly of great importance in the argument as to authorship.

It appears, further, from the above quotation that the Alexandrian scholars had observed certain peculiarities in the Epistle, distinguishing it from others by St. Paul. All that Pantænus is said to have remarked on was its being, unlike the rest, anonymous; and this he had his own way of accounting for. After him Clement suggested a further explanation, and was also struck by the style being unlike St. Paul, and reminding him rather of St. Luke. He therefore maintained, having possibly started, the view of the Greek Epistle being a translation by that evangelist from a Hebrew original. It does not appear from the way in which Eusebius quotes him, as above, that this was more than his own opinion, or that he had anything beyond internal evidence to go upon, though Delitzsch thinks otherwise. His view, in any case, is untenable, since the Epistle has distinct internal evidence of being an original composition in Greek. And so Origen, a still abler and more distinguished man, who succeeded Clement as head of the Alexandrian school, seems to have clearly seen, Eusebius being again our authority. After an account of Origen's catalogue of the canonical books, the historian proceeds, "In addition to these things, concerning the Epistle to the Hebrews, he (Origen) sets forth in his homilies upon it as follows: 'That the style (*χαρακτήρ τῆς λέξεως*) of the Epistle entitled to the Hebrews has not the rudeness in speech (*τὸ ἐν λόγῳ βωρικόν*) of the apostle, who acknowledged himself to be rude in speech (*ἰδιώτην τῷ λόγῳ*: see 2 Cor. xi. 6), that is, in his diction, but that the Epistle is more purely Greek in composition (*συνθέσει τῆς λέξεως*), every one who is competent to judge of differences of diction would acknowledge. Again, that the thoughts of the Epistle are wonderful, and not second to the acknowledged apostolic writings, this, too, every one that gives attention to the reading of the apostolic writings would agree.' Then, after other things, he adds, further, 'But I, to declare my own opinion, should say that the thoughts are the apostle's, but the diction and composition that of some one who recorded from memory the apostle's teaching, and,

as it were, interpreted [or 'wrote a commentary on,' σχολιογραφήσαντας] what had been spoken by his master. If, then, any Church receives this Epistle as Paul's, let it be well esteemed, even also on this account [i.e. let it not on this account lose the credit due to it as a witness to the truth]; for not without good reason (οὐ γὰρ εἰρή) have the men of old handed it down as Paul's. But as to who wrote the Epistle, the truth God knows. The account that has reached us is, on the part of some, that Clement, who became Bishop of the Romans, wrote the Epistle; on the part of others, that Luke, who wrote the Gospel and the Acts, did so" (Eusebius, 'Hist. Eccl.,' vi. 25).

Now, let us here observe that Origen does not, any more than his predecessors, dispute the essentially Pauline origin of the Epistle. Of this he is satisfied, both on the ground of the ancient tradition to which he properly attaches great importance, and also on the ground of the ideas of the Epistle being so entirely worthy of the great apostle. He only feels himself convinced, in view of the Greek idiom, and the general style, that Paul could not have been the actual writer. His theory is compatible with the Epistle having been written either during the apostle's life and with his knowledge and sanction, or after his death by a disciple who had taken notes of his teaching, or at any rate retained it in his mind. Further, he evidently attaches no value to the opinions which had become current in his time as to one person rather than another having been the actual writer. He was too sound a critic to consider (as Clement seems to have done) mere coincidences of phraseology cogent evidences in favour of St. Luke. All he can be sure of is that the Epistle had not been written by St. Paul himself, though he has no doubt of its being Pauline, i.e. a true embodiment of St. Paul's teaching. Now, the opinion of Origen, thus expressed, is of peculiar value; not only on account of the early age in which he lived, with all the facts that could be then known before him, but also because of his competence to form a sound judgment on such a subject; and the fact of his having been an original and somewhat free thinker adds to, rather than detracts from, the value of his verdict. His well-considered words express, in fact, the state of the case as it remains to the present day, subsequent inquiries having thrown little further light upon it.

After Origen, Dionysius of Alexandria (ob. A.D. 264-5), the bishops who succeeded him, and all the ecclesiastical writers of Egypt, Syria, and the East generally, cite the Epistle without hesitation as St. Paul's. Arius, too, and the early Arians so accepted it; and if some of the later Arians rejected it as such, it appears to have been only on controversial grounds. See Epiphanius, 'Heres.,' 69; and Theodoret, in the preface to his commentary on the Epistle, who says, "It is no wonder that those who are infected with the Arian malady should rage against the apostolic writings, separating the Epistle to the Hebrews from the rest, and calling it spurious." Eusebius also, expressing the unanimous judgment of the East, places it (though

not without allusion to the doubts, to be noticed presently, entertained by the Church of Rome) among the indisputable Pauline writings ('Hist. Ecol.,' iii. 8; iii. 25). He is aware, however, of the difficulties attending the supposition that the Greek Epistle as it stands was written by St. Paul, and gives the translation theory (which, as we have seen, was held by Clement of Alexandria) as the current one in his day, or at any rate as what he had himself got hold of: "For Paul having written to the Hebrews in their native language, some say that Luke the evangelist, and others that this same Clement (*i.e.* of Rome), translated the writing." He adds his own opinion in favour of Clement having been the translator, on the ground of resemblance, in diction and thought, between his undoubted epistle to the Corinthians and the Epistle to the Hebrews. What he thus says is only of value as testimony to the acceptance of the Epistle throughout the East as essentially Pauline. His own notions, as to its being a translation, and Clement the translator, need carry little weight with us; those of Origen (which, though he himself records them, he does not seem to have appreciated) of course outweigh them greatly.

In the West, however, there was not for some centuries any such general acceptance of the Epistle as Pauline. Though Clement's use of it, above referred to, shows that it was certainly known at Rome at the end of the first century, yet it is plain that the later Western Fathers, till the fourth century, did not recognize it as having the authority of St. Paul. In the Muratorian Fragment, composed probably not long after A.D. 170,¹ though we cannot conclude, the document being so defective, that the Epistle was not originally mentioned, yet it cannot have been included among St. Paul's; for in the extant passage which refers to these we read, "*Cum ipse beatus apostolus Paulus, sequens predecessoris sui Johannis ordinem nonnisi nominatim septem ecclesiis scribat ordine tali; ad Corinthios prima, ad Ephesias secunda, ad Philippenses tertia, ad Colossenses quarta, ad Galatas quinta, ad Thessalonicenses sexta, ad Romanos septima. . . . Verum ad Philemonem unam, et ad Titum unam, et ad Timotheum duas pro affectu et dilectione. . . . Fertur etiam ad Laodicenses [alia], alia ad Alexandrinos, Pauli nomine finctæ ad hæresim Marcionis, et alia plura quæ in catholicam ecclesiam recipi non potest.*" Thus, if it was mentioned at all in some part of the Fragment now missing, it cannot have been ranked among the real or reputed Epistles of St. Paul.² Further, Photius ('Bibl. Cod.,' 121) quotes Hippolytus (A.D. 200) as denying the Epistle to be by St. Paul; and ('Bibl. Cod.,' 232) he gives an extract from the tritheist Stephanus (surnamed *ὁ Τρίθαπος*), in which the same is said of Irenæus

¹ On the Muratorian Fragment, see Westcott's 'Canon of the New Testament,' pt. i. § 12, and Appendix C.

² It has been suggested that the spurious Epistle to the Alexandrians mentioned in the Fragment might be our Epistle to the Hebrews, which had been, perhaps, addressed to the Jews of Alexandria; in which case the early familiarity with it in that place would be accounted for. But our anonymous Epistle could hardly be spoken of as "*Pauli nomine finctæ*," or described as bearing on the heresy of Marcion.

also. Irenæus might be supposed likely, from his original training in Asia Minor, to have held to the Eastern tradition and opinion; but it does not follow that this would be so after his connection with the Western Church in Gaul; and it is observable that in his extant works (with the exception of "*verbo virtutis suæ*" in his '*Hæres.*' ii. 30, 9) there appears to be no obvious allusion to the Epistle, though, on the other hand, Eusebius ('*Hist. Eccl.*,' v. 26) says that he spoke of it and quoted it in one of his now lost works; which still proves only that he was acquainted with it. The mere negative evidence of a work not being quoted may, however, easily be pressed too far, and might often lead, if relied on, to erroneous conclusions. Hence also the silence of Novatian in his extant writings is not in itself conclusive, though the Epistle contain passages which might have served his controversial purposes. But we have, in this case, plenty of positive evidence, besides that already adduced, of the general opinion of the Western Church. Eusebius ('*Hist. Eccl.*,' vi. 20), speaking of a dialogue by Caius, "a very eloquent man," delivered at Rome, under Zephyrinus against Proclus (a Montanist), says of this Caius that he "mentions only thirteen Epistles of the holy apostle, not classing that to the Hebrews with the rest, as even yet some of the Romans do not allow it to be a work of the apostle." Jerome ('*De Vir Illustr.*,' c. 56) confirms this testimony, and gives the date of Zephyrinus, under whom Caius wrote, viz. the reign of Caracalla (A.D. 211—217). To the same period belongs the testimony of Tertullian, who is singular in distinctly assigning the Epistle to another author than St. Paul, viz. Barnabas: "*Extat enim et Barnabæ titulus ad Hebræos, a Deo satis auctorati viri, ut quem Paulus juxta se constituerit in abstinentiæ tenore* [1 Cor. ix. 6]. . . . *Et utique receptor apud ecclesias epistola Barnabæ illo apocrypho Pastore mæchorum.*" And that he refers to our Epistle appears from his going on to quote it thus: "*Monens itaque discipulos omissis omnibus initiis ad perfectionem magis tendere, Impossibile est enim, inquit, eos qui semel illuminati sunt,*" etc. (Tertullian, '*De Pudicit.*,' c. xx.).] He thus distinctly assigns it, not to Paul, but to Barnabas, and also implies that, though he himself accepted it as sufficiently authoritative, it was not so accepted by all Churches: it was only "more received" than the apocryphal '*Shepherd*,' attributed also to Barnabas. Cyprian also (ob. A.D. 258) speaks only of Epistles by St. Paul, "*ad septem ecclesias*;" Victorinus (ob. circ. 308) does the same; and, lastly, Jerome (ob. 420) distinctly says, "*Eam Latinorum consuetudo non recipit inter scripturas canonicas*" (Ep. 129, '*Ad Dardanum*'). Its non-acceptance as canonical, which Jerome thus alleges, and which is otherwise confirmed, was doubtless due mainly, if not entirely, to the fact that it was not recognized as having the authority of St. Paul; it was because its authorship had been questioned, as appears from the testimonies adduced above, that it was not included in the accepted canon.

But before the end of the fourth century, during the latter part of which Jerome thus wrote, the Epistle came to be accepted as Pauline in the West as

well as in the East. Athanasius (ob. 373), Cyril of Jerusalem (ob. 403), Gregory Nazianzen (ob. 389-90), the canon of the Council of Laodicea (364), and the eighty-fifth of the Apostolic Canons, reckon fourteen Epistles of St. Paul. So also the Council of Carthage (419), of Hippo Regius (393), of Carthage (397); Innocent I. in his 'Ep. ad Exsuperium' (405), and Gelasius (494). Ambrose also (ob. 397), Rufinus (ob. circ. 411), Gaudentius and Faustinus, refer to the Epistle as St. Paul's. Thenceforth the Epistle retained its place in the canon as one of St. Paul's without dispute, till the question was again raised in the sixteenth century. Jerome himself doubtless contributed to this result by drawing attention to the tradition and opinion of the East, and by giving expression to his own conclusions. He thus sums up the views that had been held on the subject: "*Epistola autem quæ fertur ad Hebræos non ejus creditur propter styli sermonisque dissonantiam, sed vel Barnabæ juxta Tertullianum, vel Lucæ evangelistæ juxta quosdam, vel Clementis Romanæ postea ecclesiæ episcopi, quem aiunt sententias Pauli proprio ordinasse et ornasse sermone. Vel certe quia Paulus scribebat ad Hebræos et, propter invidiam sui apud eos nominis, titulum in principio salutationis amputaverit. Scripserat ut Hebræus Hebraice, id est suo eloquio disertissime, ut ea quæ eloquenter scripta fuerant in Hebræo eloquentius verterentur in Græcam, et hanc causam esse quod a cæteris Pauli epistolis discrepare videatur*" ('De Vir Illustr.', c. 5). He evidently had before him in this summary what Clement of Alexandria and Origen, as well as others, had said; and it is to be observed that in the end he gives, as held by some, a view intermediate between that of Clement, who took the Greek Epistle to be a mere translation from St. Paul's Hebrew, and that of Origen, who seems to have regarded it as an original composition founded only on notes or recollections of the apostle's teaching. For the view here given is that an actual Hebrew letter by St. Paul had been, not simply translated, but rewritten in Greek in a more eloquent style; and apparently that St. Paul had written his original with an intention that this should be done by some other hand. Thus the form and style of the Epistle is reconciled more fully than it is by Origen with the tradition of the Pauline authorship. Further, Jerome thus expresses his own conclusions with regard to the Epistle's claim to acceptance in the West: "*Illud nostris dicendum est, hanc epistolam quæ inscribitur ad Hebræos non solum ab ecclesiis Orientis sed ab omnibus retro ecclesiasticis Græci sermonis scriptoribus quasi Pauli Apostoli suscipi, licet plerique eam vel Barnabæ vel Clementis arbitrentur, et nihil interesse cujus sit, quum ecclesiastici viri sit, et quotidie ecclesiarum lectionum celebretur, Quod si eam Latinorum consuetudo non recipit inter scripturas canonicas. nec Græcorum quidem ecclesiæ Apocalypsim Johannis eadem libertate suscipiunt, et tamen nos utrumque suscipimus, nequaquam hujus temporis consuetudinem sed veterum scriptorum auctoritatem sequentes, qui plerumque utriusque abutuntur testimoniis, non ut interdum de apocryphis facere solent (quippe qui et gentilitium literarum raro utantur exemplis), sed*

quasi canonicis et ecclesiasticis" (Ep. 129, 'Ad Dardanum'). The drift of this is that, notwithstanding the Latin use, the acceptance of the Epistle by the whole East, and its being quoted as canonical by the Greek Fathers, justifies its reception into the canon, and that it ought to be so received. He adduces as a parallel case that of the Apocalypse, which had been regarded in the East as was the Epistle to the Hebrews in the West; but both had been alike quoted by ancient writers as *canonical* and *authoritative* (not merely as they occasionally refer to apocryphal or even profane writings), and therefore he holds that both should be alike received. He expresses no opinion as to the author of the Epistle, considering the question of no importance as long as it was some one whose writings might claim a place in the sacred canon. But his deciding distinctly for the Epistle's canonicity would deprive of its main interest the comparatively unimportant question of its authorship, and so it came to pass that the Eastern tradition was afterwards accepted generally.

That other great and influential theologian of the same age, St. Augustine (ob. 430), took and expressed a similar view of the Epistle, apparently not caring to question the Pauline authorship. In one passage, after laying down a rule to guide the reader in his estimate of canonical books, to the effect that such as are received by all Catholic Churches are to be preferred to those which some do not receive, and that of the latter those which "plures gravioresque ecclesiæ" receive are to be ranked above the rest, he proceeds to reckon in the canon fourteen Epistles of St. Paul ('De Doctrina Christiana,' ii. 8). Elsewhere he speaks of being especially moved by the authority of the Eastern Churches ("magisque me movet auctoritas ecclesiarum Orientalium") to accept this Epistle, "quamquam nonnullis incerta sit" ('De Peccatorum Meritis et Remissione,' i. 27). In his 'De Civitate Dei' (xvi. 22) he also says of it, "quæ teste usi sunt illustres catholicæ regulæ defensores;" and in his works he often quotes it, though generally avoiding mention of St. Paul as the writer.

The Epistle having thus come at last to be fully received into the Western canon along with the undoubted Epistles of St. Paul, it was afterwards, in the uncritical ages that followed, regarded without question as one of his. But with the revival of inquiry and independent thought at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the old doubts, as was to be expected, revived also, being suggested by study of patristic literature, as well as by observation of the style of the Epistle itself. A full account of the views expressed by the various leading theologians then and subsequently will be found in Alford's 'Prolegomena' to the Epistle. In the Roman obedience, Ludovicus Vives, a Spanish theologian, and Cardinal Cajetan, appear among the early doubters; and even after the Council of Trent had to a certain extent closed the question by requiring under anathema belief in the Pauline authorship, Bellarmine and Estius did not feel precluded from assigning the matter only, and not the language, to St. Paul. Erasmus was decided against St. Paul's authorship, and gave his reasons at length, founded both

on ancient authority and on internal evidence. Like St. Jerome of old, he regarded the question as of little moment, and would not, he says, have written so much about it but for the outcry raised against every doubt of the received view, as if doubt were heresy. "If," says he, "the Church certainly defines it to be Paul's, I willingly render my intellect captive to the obedience of faith; but, as far as my own judgment is concerned, it does not seem to me to be his." The more decided Reformers, Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, the Magdeburg Centuriators, and at first Beza, were of the same opinion; Luther being memorable, not only for his decided view, but also for suggesting a new name, that of Apollos, as most likely, in his judgment, to have been the actual writer. Subsequently, among Protestants as well as Catholics, there was a growing tendency to acquiesce in the old traditional view, and even to make a point of it—notably so among our own divines, usually inclined to be conservative, and to shrink from disturbing accepted views. In comparatively recent times the question has been again opened among the German divines, the great majority of whom (Bengel, Stowe, and Hofmann being exceptions) have been, and are still, decidedly against St. Paul having been the writer. Among ourselves, however, his direct authorship has ever had, and still has, many defenders, the most recent being the commentator on the Epistle in the lately published 'Speaker's Commentary.'

To sum up the several views that have been and may be held, with brief notice of the main reasons for or against each, we may state them thus—

1. That St. Paul wrote the Epistle in Greek as it stands.

This view rests really on the single ground of the old tradition in the East. But what does this amount to? All we know accurately is that at Alexandria, in the second century, the Epistle, being itself anonymous, had been handed down, and was generally received, as one of St. Paul's; but that the learned there even then were not thereby convinced that he had actually written it: they were distinctly of opinion that, at any rate, the Greek was not his; and the greatest of them, Origen, did not think he had been in any sense the actual writer. Why should we set more store by the tradition than those competent persons who were in a better position for judging of its value? It may in any case without difficulty be accounted for. Received early, itself unnamed, with others bearing the apostle's name, representing and emanating from the same school of thought and teaching—actually written, if not by St. Paul, at any rate by one of his disciples or associates—the Epistle might easily come to be generally read and accepted, in the absence of any discriminative criticism, as, like the rest, St. Paul's. The tradition, then, is not valid evidence for more than this—but for this it is valid, confirming the internal evidence, as Origen perceived—that the Epistle was in origin Pauline, though not of necessity St. Paul's.

The internal evidence of some other actual writer than St. Paul does not rest solely or principally on the number of words and expressions in the Epistle which are not found in St. Paul's acknowledged writings. Differ-

ences of this kind may be made too much of as proof of different authorship; there are a considerable number of ἀπαξ λεγόμενα in some of St. Paul's undoubted Epistles, and especially in the Pastorals, which are the latest. The same writer may greatly vary his words and phrases in different works and at different times, in accordance with his train of thought, surrounding influence and associations, books lately read, or the subjects treated. Hence the lists that have been made of words or phrases common to this Epistle and St. Luke alone, or to this Epistle and St. Paul alone, or found in this Epistle and in St. Paul's own speeches as recorded by St. Luke, are not, whatever their value, important for the main argument, the essential point of which is that the whole Greek style of the Epistle is different from that of St. Paul's acknowledged writings—more classical in its idiom, as well as more finished and rhetorical; and also that the studied arrangement of the thoughts and arguments, the systematic plan of the whole work, is unlike the way of writing so characteristic of the great apostle. It may indeed be said that, when St. Paul set himself to the careful composition of a work which, though in epistolary form, was meant as a lasting treatise on a great subject, he would be likely to depart from his usual epistolary style, and that a man of his learning and versatile powers would, even humanly speaking, be capable of adopting both the language and the arrangement suitable to his purpose. This consideration would have decided weight in the way of explanation if there were any really valid external evidence of his having been the actual writer. In the absence of such the internal evidence retains its force, to be felt by appreciative students rather than explained. If any at the present day are insensible to it, they may at any rate be reminded of the impression it has made on the great scholars and theologians of antiquity, as well as of more recent times. On the whole, the right conclusion seems to be that the view of St. Paul having written the Epistle as it stands in Greek is decidedly improbable, though still not untenable.

2. That the Greek Epistle is a translation from a Hebrew original by St. Paul.

This view, as has been already intimated, is certainly untenable. For not only are there, in the Epistle essentially Greek phrases, such as could not well have been the mere equivalents of any Hebrew ones, but the whole has the unmistakable ring, convincing to scholars, of an original composition—that of one who had both thought and expressed himself in the Greek language. Further, in the quotations from the Old Testament the Septuagint is almost uniformly followed, and this in cases where it varies from the Hebrew text; and sometimes such variations are followed up in such sort that the very argument depends upon them. Such use of the Septuagint seems quite incompatible with the idea of the Epistle having been written originally in Hebrew.

3. That St. Paul supplied the ideas of the Epistle, which another person, with his knowledge and sanction, put into their present form.

This is a fully tenable view, being virtually that expressed, as has been seen, by Jerome. It is no valid objection to it that St. Paul's undoubted Epistles are not equally coloured by the modes of thought of the Alexandrian Jewish philosophy, of which Philo is the notable exponent. For they are occasionally so coloured, though not to the same extent (cf. *e.g.* Gal. iv. 22, etc.; Col. i. 15, etc.). And, further, any stronger colour of this kind that may be perceptible in the Epistle might be due in part to the writer himself carrying out in his own way the suggestions of St. Paul.

This view is consistent with the supposition that the Epistle was sent to its destination by the apostle himself, endorsed by him, and recognized from the first as having his authority; and thus the Eastern tradition would be fully accounted for and justified. If so, it is also surely possible (though the idea does not appear to have commended itself to commentators) that the concluding verses, from ch. xiii. 18 to the end, in which the first person is for the first time used, and which remind us peculiarly of St. Paul, were dictated by himself in his own name, the final "grace" being, as in other cases, his authenticating autograph. In this case the expression in ver. 22, "I have written unto you in few words," may refer only to what had thus been appended by himself.

4. That the Epistle was written, independently of St. Paul, by some associate who was familiar with his teaching, and gave his own expression to it.

This is Origen's view, and is also tenable. It does not, however, so fully account as that last given for the tradition of the Epistle being St. Paul's. It may, if it were so, have been composed either during the apostle's life or shortly after his death; but in the latter case very shortly, if the conclusion arrived at under "Date of the Epistle" be correct.

As to who the actual writer might be, if it was not St. Paul, four have been especially suggested, viz. Luke, Clement of Rome, Barnabas, and Apollos. It does not appear that any of their names had been handed down by tradition, or were even more than conjectures on the ground of likelihood, though all, except Apollos, had, as we have seen, very early mention.

(1) **LUKE.** He seems to have been thought of by Clement of Alexandria and others, because of the purer Greek of the Epistle resembling his, and its containing words and phrases which are peculiar elsewhere to his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles; and also, we may suppose, because of his close association with St. Paul as his companion, and the tradition of his Gospel having been written under St. Paul's direction. These are good grounds for the conjecture, but still, as far as we know, it was conjecture only.

(2) **CLEMENT OF ROME.** He, as we have seen, was thought of in early days, being named by Origen as being, as well as St. Luke, one of the then reputed writers. If there was at that time good reason to believe that the Epistle had been sent from Rome, the name of Clement might naturally suggest itself as of one who had been associated with the apostle

during his last residence there, and who was ruler of the Roman Church immediately or soon after his martyrdom. Still more if he were the same Clement as is mentioned by St. Paul (Phil. iv. 3). Further, the occurrence in Clement's undoubted Epistle to the Corinthians of both ideas and language taken from the Epistle to the Hebrews, appears to have confirmed the supposition. This last circumstance led Eusebius (a Hebrew original being supposed) to think him more likely than St. Luke to have been the translator. "Some say that Luke the evangelist, and others that this same Clement, translated the writing; which may be rather true, from the epistle of Clement and that to the Hebrews preserving the same style of diction, and from the thoughts in the two compositions not being far apart" ('Hist. Eccl.' iii. 36). So also Euthelius (circa 460), purporting to give the favourite view: "For (the Epistle) having been written to the Hebrews in their own language is said to have been afterwards translated, according to some by Luke, but according to the majority by Clement; for it preserves his style" (ch. ii.). But the theory of the Greek Epistle being a mere translation being abandoned, the style of Clement certainly does not really suggest him as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. All that appears is that he was acquainted with it, and cited it, and introduced some of its thoughts and language; but his own writing exhibits nothing of that powerful grasp, close reasoning, systematic arrangement, and eloquence of expression, which mark the Epistle. Further, if he had been the writer, some tradition to that effect might have been expected to linger in the Roman Church. But that Church seems hardly to have known anything about the Epistle in the age after him, and, as we have seen, long hesitated about even receiving it at all.

(3) BARNABAS. As a Levite, and hence likely to be well versed in Jewish ritual; as St. Paul's original associate, and with him from the first opposed to the exclusive Judaists; as "a good man, full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith," and with an effectual power of exhortation (Acts vi. 23, 24);—he may, for aught we know, have been a fit and capable person to be inspired for the writing of such an Epistle as this is. Nor does the breach at one time between him and St. Paul (Acts xv.), or his temporary vacillation at Antioch (Gal. ii. 13), preclude his having become again the associate of the great apostle and the exponent of his teaching. We have, however, no knowledge of this, or of St. Barnabas's style and natural powers as a writer, none of his genuine utterances, written or spoken, being on record. Thus the only real ground for the supposition of Barnabas is the assertion of Tertullian, which is certainly remarkable as being made positively and not as a conjecture only. It would carry more weight than it does, did we know that he had any real ground for it except his own opinion or that of others in his day, or if writers after him had seemed to attach importance to it.

(4) APOLLOS: first suggested by Luther, and since taken up with considerable confidence by many. This is certainly a very tempting hypothesis;

the main, and this very serious, objection to it being that none of the ancients seem to have thought of him at all. Apollos is described (Acts xviii. 24) as "a Jew, an Alexandrian by race, an eloquent man [*λόγιος*, which may mean either 'eloquent' or 'learned'—either meaning suits the writer of the Epistle], and mighty in the Scriptures," and one who "mightily convinced the Jews, . . . showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ." Every word here is applicable to such a man as the writer seems to have been. Further, the relation of Apollos and his teaching to St. Paul and his teaching, as alluded to by St. Paul himself, corresponds to the relation of this Epistle to St. Paul's undoubted ones. It appears, from the first three chapters of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, that the party at Corinth which called itself that of Apollos depreciated St. Paul's preaching in comparison with his, as being too simple and rude, and deficient in "the wisdom of this world;" and yet it is evident from what St. Paul says that the teaching of Apollos, though different in form, was essentially the same as his: "I planted; Apollos watered." What is thus said of the preaching of Apollos in relation to the preaching of St. Paul is just what might be said of the Epistle to the Hebrews in relation to the Epistles which we know to have been written by St. Paul. Such are the very plausible reasons for assigning the Epistle to Apollos. But, on the other hand, the fact that none of the ancients, who may be supposed to have known more of the probabilities than we do, seem even to have named him, remains a serious objection to the supposition.

III. THE CANONICITY OF THE EPISTLE.

Its claim to be included in the canon as inspired and authoritative is, as has been already observed, independent of its authorship. It is enough that it should have been written by one of the gifted ones, during the period of the special activity of the inspiring Spirit; else were the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke to be accounted uncanonical, none of these claiming apostolic authorship. Now, that its date was in the apostolic age, when the inspiring Spirit was in full activity, has been shown above. We therefore require only to be further satisfied of its early acceptance as canonical, and of its having in itself no internal evidence of being otherwise. As to early acceptance, there is, as has been seen, no doubt of it as far as the whole of the East was concerned: the slowness of the West to receive it without reserve has alone to be accounted for. On this point we observe—

1. That the earliest Roman Father, St. Clement, was certainly acquainted with it, and quoted it in the same way as he did other books included in the canon. It is true, his quotations or references are anonymous; but so are they also in other cases; and so are those of the apostolic Fathers generally. It was not their way to quote explicitly and exactly, but rather to interweave language that had become current in the Church as authori-

tative into the texture of their own writings (see Westcott, 'On the Canon of the New Testament,' pt. i. p. 47). And so Clement uses the language of this Epistle in the same way as he does that of undoubted Epistles of St. Paul and of other New Testament Scripture. It does not hence follow that the canon of the New Testament had at that time become definitely fixed; but it does follow that many at least of the documents now included in the canon were already well known and regarded as authoritative, and that the Epistle to the Hebrews was among them.¹

To this testimony of Clement may be added that of Justin Martyr in the middle of the second century, who, though a native of Palestine, went to reside in Rome, probably wrote there, and certainly suffered there. In his 'Apology' he four times calls Christ "the Son and Apostle of God" (ch. 14; 82; and 83). Now, the title *Apostle* being found applied to Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews only (ch. iii. 1), while that of *Son* pervades it, it seems likely that he is quoting from it: and, identifying Christ with the Angel who spoke to Moses, he speaks of the two titles, *Angel* and *Apostle*, as though equally sanctioned by Divine authority. "And the Word of God is his Son, as we have before said. He is also called the Angel (who declares) and the Apostle (who is sent)." Again, "Now these words have been spoken to show that the Son of God and Apostle is Jesus Christ, who before was the Word, [and appeared sometimes in the form of fire," etc. Again, "The Jews, therefore, who always thought that it was the Father of all things that spoke to Moses, whereas he who spoke to him was the Son of God, who is also called the *Angel* and the *Apostle*, are justly upbraided," etc. Such language affords at any rate a presumption that Justin Martyr regarded the Epistle to the Hebrews as on a par in authority with the Old Testament Scriptures. Other apparent references to the Epistle by Justin Martyr are found in 'Dial. ad Tryph.,' ch. 13 (cf. Heb. iv. 13, etc.), and ch. 34 (cf. Heb. viii., etc.).

There being such evidence (notably and positively that of Clement) of a recognition of the Epistle at Rome in the second century, the doubt about it which prevailed afterwards is remarkable, and calls for explanation. It may have been that, though Clement was familiar with it (having, perhaps, been privy to its original composition), no copy of it had been preserved in the Roman Church, nor any distinct tradition about it, possibly because, being addressed to Hebrews (presumably in the East), it was not felt to concern the Roman Christians. Consequently, when it afterwards reached Rome from the East as one of St. Paul's, its anonymousness

¹ The following are the principal references to the Epistle to the Hebrews by St. Clement: In ch. xxxvi., "Ὁς ὡν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς μεγαλωσύνης αὐτοῦ τοσοῦτον μέζων ἐστὶν ἀγγέλων ὅσον διαφορότερον ὄνομα κεκληρονόμηκεν (cf. Heb. i. 3, 4). Further references in the remainder of ch. xxxvi. are no less obvious. In ch. xvii., Μωσῆς πιστὸς ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ οἰκῇ ἐλάβθη (cf. Heb. iii. 2); also Ὅστινες ἐν δέρμασιν αἰνέοις καὶ μελωταῖς περιεπάτησαν, etc. (cf. Heb. xi. 37). In ch. xliii., Ὁ μακάριος πιστὸς θεράπων ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ οἰκῇ Μωσῆς τὰ διατεταγμένα αὐτῷ πάντα ἐσημείασεν ἐν ταῖς ἱεραῖς βιβλίοις, etc. Other distinct resemblances of thought and expression will be found in ch. i.; x.; xii.; lviii.

and its unlikeness to the apostle's known writings might naturally induce suspicion that it was not what it was said to be; and such suspicion would be confirmed when it came to be known that even in the East its authorship was questioned. The Westerns, not having, as the Easterns had, any tradition of their own in its favour, might not unreasonably hesitate on such grounds about receiving it at all into their canon. For be it observed—and this is an important consideration—that—

2. It was apparently only because its authorship was questioned that its claim to canonicity was in the first instance questioned too. And then, as time went on, the reluctance thus arising seems to have been strengthened by heretical misinterpretations of some passages contained in it. The phrase, *τῇ ποιήσαντι αὐτὸν*, in ch. iii. 2 had been taken in a sense favourable to Arianism; and ch. vi. 4, etc., had been used in support of Novatianism. "Et in ea quia rhetorice scripsit, sermone plausibili inde non putant esse ejusdem apostoli; et quia et factum Christum dicit in ea (ch. iii. 2) inde non legitur; de pœnitentia autem propter Novatianos æque" (Philastrius, 'De Hæres.,' 89). Ambrose also, in his 'De Pœnitentia,' defends ch. vi. 4, etc., from the Novatian misapplication of it.

The long hesitation of the Western Church being thus accounted for, the Epistle's claim to full canonicity is not really affected by it; especially as this claim came at length to be fully recognized in the West as well as in the East in spite of former prejudices.

As to the internal evidence of the Epistle itself, it is not only not against, but strongly in favour of, its claim to canonicity. The marked distinction between the writings of the New Testament and the few that have come down to us from the sub-apostolic age has often been observed and commented on. The difference consists, not only in the tone of authority that pervades the former, but also in their entire complexion as compositions of a higher order. We feel ourselves, as we read them, as if walking in a purer and more heavenly atmosphere, peculiar to the apostolic age. Without attempting to define this difference further, which none can fail to recognize, we may say, without hesitation, that the Epistle to the Hebrews takes rank in this regard with the other writings of the New Testament canon. This Origen felt when he spoke of the thoughts of the Epistle being "wonderful, and not second to the acknowledged apostolic writings." Its peculiar inspiration is further the more apparent from there being other writings of somewhat similar character, not far distant from it in point of time, with which we may compare it. For it is, among the Epistles, peculiarly tinged with the mode of thought of the religious philosophy of the Alexandrian school, and may therefore be put in contrast with other writings, whether Jewish or Christian, belonging to that school. With them purporting to discover in the records and ritual of the Old Testament a meaning beyond the letter, and to find in Judaism the germ and prophecy of a religion for all humanity, it avoids all far-fetched and fanciful interpretations such as are found elsewhere, and, while adopting many of the ideas of the Alexandrine

theosophy, makes them subservient only to the elucidation of the same essential gospel as is preached, though in various forms of expression, throughout the New Testament canon. How easily that theosophy, when taken up by Christians, might lead to perversions of the gospel is apparent from the Gnostic heresies that so soon arose out of it. But not a shadow of a tendency to such perversion is found in this Epistle. We have, too, in the so-called Epistle of Barnabas—a document of very early date, though of unknown authorship—a specimen of the treatment of Old Testament symbolism even by an orthodox writer without the guidance of inspiration in the next succeeding age. In it, too, the ancient history and ritual are mystically interpreted after the manner of the Alexandrine school; but, whereas in the canonical Epistle the Old Testament is treated in a broad and intelligent spirit, and with regard to its essential drift and purport, in the other particular passages are arbitrarily taken, and often fanciful meanings drawn out of them which they will not legitimately bear. (On the essential difference between the two Epistles, which must be obvious to all appreciative readers, see Westcott, 'On the Canon of the New Testament,' pt. i. p. 41.)

IV. TO WHOM AND WHENCE THE EPISTLE WAS SENT.

All we can be sure of is that it was originally sent to Christians of Jewish race, residing in some definite locality. This last conclusion follows from the reference to the past experience of the persons addressed (ch. vi. 10, etc.; x. 32), and to their departed leaders (ch. xiii. 7), and from the writer's expressed intention to visit them (ch. xiii. 19, 23). It was, therefore, not an encyclical Epistle to all Hebrew Churches, though it may have been intended to be generally circulated, so as to be of use to all. But what Church or group of Churches it was first meant for can only be surmised. The designation *Hebrews* (*Ἑβραῖοι*) is used in the New Testament to denote those who adhered to the Hebrew language in public worship and to the national Hebrew customs and traditions, in opposition to the *Hellenizing Jews*, called *Ἑλληνισταί* (Acts vi. 1; cf. ix. 29; xi. 20); but also, in its more general and proper sense, to denote all of Hebrew race (2 Cor. xi. 22; Phil. iii. 5). Hence it cannot be concluded from the title, *Πρὸς Ἑβραίους*, that the Jewish converts in Palestine rather than elsewhere were addressed. Nor, on the other hand, is the fact of the Epistle having been written in Greek, and of the LXX. being always quoted, an argument against this supposition. For Greek as well as Aramaic was at that time spoken in Palestine, and was the language of Christian literature from the first. It is remarkable in this connection that Justin Martyr, though born at Flavia Neapolis (the ancient *Sichem*) in Palestine, probably at the close of the first century, shows no signs of being acquainted with the vernacular language of his country, and even in arguing with the Jew Trypho refers only to the LXX. Chrysostom, and the Greek Fathers generally suppose the Churches of

Palestine to be addressed, and this appears still to be the prevailing view, being that which most naturally suggests itself, and at least as probable as any other. Alford, indeed, argues at considerable length against it, and in favour of the Epistle having been addressed to Rome; but his reasoning is by no means convincing.

Nor can we determine with any certainty the locality from which the Epistle was sent. The expression, "They of Italy (οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας) salute you" (ch. xiii. 24), does not settle the question whether the writer was or was not in Italy when he wrote. It may mean either persons who had come from Italy or simply Italians. In favour of the latter meaning, cf. Acts x. 23, τῶν ἀπὸ Ἰόππης: xii. 1, τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας: xvii. 13, οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης: xxi. 27, οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἀσίας Ἰουδαῖοι. With these instances before us (all being from St. Luke, whose language that of the Epistle so constantly resembles), we may most naturally take the phrase to mean the Hebrews, or the Christians generally, who were of Italy; and if so, to suppose the writer to have been himself in Italy, possibly in Rome, when he thus sent salutations from them. He could not, in fact, have used a more appropriate expression, if this were the case. This expression, then, seems to afford a probability, though not a certainty, that it was so. The familiarity of the Roman Clement with the Epistle, though no copy of it seems to have been preserved in the Roman Church, may further be thus accounted for.

V. THE PURPOSE AND SUBJECT OF THE EPISTLE.

It is not, in original intention, an expository treatise so much as a hortatory letter, though so large a part of it is devoted to exposition. It does indeed supply, for us and for all ages, an invaluable treatise on the Law in relation to Christ; but its main purpose was originally hortatory, the expositions throughout leading up to the hortations, which come in, as the Epistle goes on, with increasing force.

We may better understand this its immediate purpose, if we call to mind the original relation of the Church to Judaism and the changes in that relation which had by degrees ensued.

The first Christians at Jerusalem regarded themselves as still belonging to the religious commonwealth of Israel, and, with the apostles, attended the temple daily (Acts ii. 46). They were slow also to rise above the idea of the gospel being intended for the house of Israel only: "They which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen" for the most part "preached the Word to none but unto the Jews only" (Acts xi. 19). The Samaritans had indeed been preached to (Acts viii.), but the speaking to Greeks at Antioch by "some who were men of Cyprus and Cyrene" (Acts xi. 20) is mentioned as something new and unusual; even Peter would have hesitated to receive Cornelius into the Church without the special enlightenment of that memorable vision (Acts x.). His reception, sanctioned by signs from above, and approved at length by "those of the

circumcision" at Jerusalem (Acts xi. 18), was an important event; thenceforth the principle was established that Gentiles were admissible equally with Jews to the privileges of the new covenant; and so no offence was taken at Jerusalem when, especially through the preaching of Paul and Barnabas, large numbers came straight from heathenism into the Church. But still a question remained as to the terms of admission. The strict Hebrew party at Jerusalem insisted on their being circumcised, and keeping the Law of Moses; they would have them members of the Jewish as well as of the Christian Church, after the manner of proselytes of the gate. The Council held at Jerusalem under the presidency of St. James, attended by Paul and Barnabas as advocates of freedom, and addressed in the same sense by St. Peter, decided that no such burden ought to be laid on the Gentile converts; only a few legal restrictions being for the time enjoined, apparently for the avoidance of offence. This was a second important step in advance. But it did not close the controversy. The party of Judaists, pleading, it would seem, however unjustifiably, the support of St. James (see Gal. ii. 12), still maintained their position, and endeavoured everywhere to thwart and depreciate St. Paul. So great was their influence, and so strong the feeling in Jewish circles against associating with uncircumcised converts, that even Peter and Barnabas were at one time induced to temporize (Gal. ii. 11—14). Paul, however, stood firm in asserting and acting on the principle that Christianity had become independent of Judaism, that justification was through faith in Christ and not through the works of the Law, and that to admit of any compromise would be to preach another gospel. It was through him, humanly speaking, that the true conception of what the gospel meant eventually triumphed, and that the Church emerged from those once bitter contests, not a sect of Judaism, but catholic for all mankind. Still, even St. Paul was very tender towards conscientious Jewish prejudices; whatever he could do to conciliate without the sacrifice of principle he did: unto the Jews he became as a Jew, that he might gain the Jews (1 Cor. ix. 20); he "took and circumcised" Timothy (which he could do without inconsistency in the case of one whose mother was a Jewess) "because of the Jews which were in those quarters" (Acts xvi. 3); he himself went through a ceremonial observance at Jerusalem in deference to the many believers there who were zealous for the Law (Acts xxi. 20—27); he was willing that Jewish Christians should act up to their own convictions as long as they would leave others free; and towards those who did so, though regarding them as weak brethren, he earnestly enjoined tolerance and tenderness (Rom. xiv.; 1 Cor. x. 23, etc.). And in thus acting he was wise as well as charitable. For we can well understand how hard it would be for the Jews to give up their deeply seated hereditary prejudices, and how it would not have been desirable to subject them to so great a shock as would have been caused by requiring them all at once to do so.

But when the Epistle to the Hebrews was written, the time had come

for a complete and final severance from the ancient order. For now the predicted judgment was impending on Jerusalem, the temple was about to be destroyed for ever, the whole sacrificial system connected therewith to cease, and the nation to be scattered through the world without a home in Palestine. Full time was it now for Christ's followers fully to perceive that from the old dispensation, never more than provisional, the glory was passed away; to come entirely out of the once holy but now doomed city; to lean no longer on the tottering fabric of the temple, lest their very faith should be shattered in its downfall. And there seems to have been at that time a peculiar need for the note of warning to be loud and rousing. For it appears from passages in the Epistle that some, at least, of the Hebrew Christians had shown signs of retrogression rather than of advance; they had not only failed to make the progress they should have done in appreciation of the true meaning of the gospel,—they were even in danger of falling back from it to their old position. It is not difficult to understand how this might be. As the principles of which St. Paul had been the great advocate more and more prevailed, and as the Church seemed to be drifting more and more away from Israelite nationality, those who still cling fondly to old associations might easily become alarmed lest the stream should be carrying them they knew not whither. Hence a reaction in some quarters would be likely to set in, not without risk, such as is hinted at as possible, of entire relapse from Christianity. Then in such as were thus wavering the continued persecutions to which Christians were subjected, and the increasing obloquy in which they were held by their fellow-countrymen, and the seemingly long delay of Christ's coming which they had once believed to be close at hand, would increase doubt and faintness of heart, and cause the very faith in Christ of some to fail. It does not appear from the Epistle that this state of feeling was general among the Hebrew Christians—being only hinted at delicately from time to time, and then at once hopefully repudiated—but it evidently did prevail with some. For a final earnest warning to such as these, and for the encouragement and confirmation in the faith of others, the Epistle was in the first place written; and it is admirably adapted for its purpose. For its main purport is to show, from the Old Testament Scriptures themselves, that the Mosaic dispensation was from the first only preparatory for and prophetic of a higher one to come which was entirely to supersede it, and that Christ had come as the one only true High Priest for all mankind, the true fulfilment of all ancient ritual and prophecy, the satisfaction of all human needs, to renounce whom would be to renounce salvation.

It is evident from the above review how entirely an Epistle with such a drift, and written with such a purpose, reflects the mind and spirit of St. Paul, whatever may be said of the language and the treatment of the subject handled. It expresses essentially the view of the relation of the gospel to the Law, and of the office and work of Christ, of which he had been ever the distinguished champion; and its warnings and exhortations

are such as he would be likely to desire earnestly to address to his compatriots, in whom he took so deep an interest (cf. Rom. x. 1, etc.), in the peculiar circumstances of the time. And thus the conclusion, on other grounds also probable, that the Epistle was at any rate written by one who, whether directly instructed for the purpose by himself or not, had imbibed the spirit of his teaching, is very strongly confirmed. Nor is this conclusion inconsistent with the fact of his having felt himself to be peculiarly the apostle of the Gentiles, and been previously anxious not to invade the province of the apostles of the circumcision. For the original leaders of the Hebrews addressed were no longer with them to exhort and guide them (see ch. xiii. 7), and the peculiar circumstances of the time would account for and justify an exceptional appeal. And lastly we may observe that the sort of apology in the concluding chapter for addressing "the word of exhortation" to the readers, and the fear implied lest it might not be well taken by all, support the idea of the source of the Epistle having been such as is supposed.

The rendering of the text of the Epistle given in the first place in the following Exposition is, as a general rule, that of the Authorized Version, other translations being reserved for notice in the comments. This rule has not, however, been uniformly followed in cases where an alteration has appeared necessary for bringing out the true sense of a passage.

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE HEBREWS.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER I.

Vers. 1—4.—EXORDIUM, intimating in a succession of choice and pregnant phrases, the drift of the Epistle; a condensed summary of the coming argument. It briefly anticipates the views to be set forth in the sequel, of the revelation of God in Christ excelling far, and being destined to supersede, all that had preceded it, as being the ultimate Divine manifestation in the Son, according to the full meaning of the term involved in ancient prophecy;—of the eternal Divinity of him who was thus revealed in time as Son—of his accomplishing, as such, the reality signified by the ancient priesthood; and of his exaltation, as such, to his predestined glory and dominion on high. We find in the introduction to some of St. Paul's Epistles somewhat similar adumbrations of his subject, but none so finished and rhetorical as this. And if its style affords an argument, as far as it goes, against the immediate Pauline authorship of the Epistle, still more does it appear almost conclusive against the view of its being a translation. Not merely the alliteration in *πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως*, but the Greek structure of the whole, with its rhythmical flow, betokens an original composition. The rolling music of the language cannot, of course, be reproduced in an English translation.

Ver. 1.—Retaining the order of the words in the original, we may translate, In many portions, and in many modes of old God having spoken to the fathers in the prophets. *Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως*—not a mere alliterative redundancy, denoting variously:—the writer's usual choice use of words forbids this supposition. Nor is the *μερῶς* of the first adverb to be taken (as in the A.V.) to denote portions of *time*:—this is not the proper meaning of the compound. Nor (for

the same reason) does it denote various *degrees* of prophetic inspiration, but (on etymological as well as logical grounds) the various *portions* of the preparatory revelation to "the fathers." It was not one utterance, but many utterances; given, in fact, at divers times, though it is to the diversity of the utterances, and not of the times, that the expression points. Then the second adverb denotes the various *modes* of the several former revelations—not necessarily or exclusively the rabbinical distinction between dream, vision, inspiration, voices, angels; or that between the visions and dreams of prophets and the "mouth to mouth" revelation to Moses, referred to in Numb. xii. 6—9; but rather the various characters or forms of the various utterances in themselves. Some were in the way of primeval promises; some of glimpses into the Divine righteousness, as in the Law given from Mount Sinai; some of significant ritual, as in the same Law; some of typical history and typical persons, spoken of under inspiration as representing an unfulfilled ideal; some of the yearnings and aspirations, or distinct predictions, of psalmists and of prophets. But all these were but partial, fragmentary, anticipatory utterances, leading up to and adumbrating the one complete, all-absorbing "speaking of God to us in the Son," which is placed in contrast with them all. If the subsequent treatment in this Epistle of the Old Testament utterances is to be taken as a key for unlocking the meaning of the exordium, such ideas were in the writer's mind when he thus wrote. "*Πολυμερῶς* pertinet ad materiam, *πολυτρόπως* ad formam" (Bengel). *Of old*; i.e. in the ages comprised in the Old Testament record. Though it is true that God has revealed himself variously since the world was made to other than the saints of the Old Testament, and though he ceased

not to speak in some way to his people between the times of Malachi and of Christ, yet both the expression, "to the fathers," and the instances of Divine utterances given subsequently in the Epistle, restrict us in our interpretation to the Old Testament canon. Addressing Hebrews, it is from this that the writer argues. *Having spoken*; a word used elsewhere to express all the ways in which God has made himself, his will, and his counsels, known (cf. Matt. x. 20; Luke i. 45, 70; John ix. 29; Acts iii. 21; vii. 6). *To the fathers*; the ancestors of the Jews in respect both of race and of faith; the saints of the Old Testament. The word had a well-understood meaning (cf. Matt. xxiii. 30; Luke i. 55, 72; xi. 47; and especially Rom. ix. 5). For the double sense of the term "father," thus used, see John viii. 56, "your father Abraham;" but again, John viii. 39, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham;" and also Rom. iv. and Gal. iii. 7. But this distinction between physical and spiritual ancestry does not come in here. *In the prophets*. The word "prophet" must be taken here in a general sense; not confined to the prophets distinctively so called, as in Luke xxiv. 44, "Moses, the prophets, and the psalms." For both Moses and the psalms are quoted in the sequel, to illustrate the ancient utterances. *Προφήτης* means, both in classical and Hellenistic Greek (as does the Hebrew נָבִי), of which *προφήτης* is the equivalent), not a foreteller, but a forthteller of the mind of God, an inspired expounder (cf. *Δις προφήτης* *ὁμιλίας πατρός*, *Æsch.*, 'Eum.' 19; and Exod. vii. 1, "See I have made thee a god to Pharaoh, and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet"). Observe also the sense of *προφητεία* in St. Paul's Epistles (especially 1 Cor. xiv.). In this sense Moses, David, and all through whom God in any way spoke to man, were prophets. On the exact force of the preposition *ἐν*, many views have been entertained. It does not mean "in the books of the prophets," — the corresponding "in the Son" precludes this; nor that God by his Spirit spoke *within* the prophets, — this idea does not come in naturally here; nor is "the Son" presented afterwards as one in whom the Godhead dwelt, so much as being himself a manifestation of God; nor may we take *ἐν* as simply a Hellenism for *διὰ*, — the writer does not use prepositions indiscriminately. *Ἐν* (as Alford explains it) differs from *διὰ* as denoting the element in which this speaking takes place. This use of the preposition is found also in classical Greek; cf. *σημαίνειν ἐν αἰσιν*, frequent in Xenophon; in the New Testament, cf. *Ἐν τῷ ἔρχοντι τῶν δαιμονίων ἐμβαλλεῖ τὰ δαιμόνια* (Matt. ix. 34).

Ver. 2.—*In these last days*. The true reading being *ἐν ἰσχύει τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων*, not *ἐν ἰσχύει*, as in the Textus Receptus, translate, *at the end of these days*. The Received Text would, indeed, give the same meaning, the position of the article denoting "the last of these days," not "these last days." The reference appears to be to the common rabbinical division of time into *αἶων οὗτος*, and *αἶων μέλλων*, or *ἐρχόμενος*: the former denoting the pre-Messianic, the latter the Messianic period. Thus "these days" is equivalent to *αἶων οὗτος*, "the present age," and the whole expression to *ἐπὶ συντέλειᾳ τῶν αἰώνων*, "at the end of the ages" (*infra*, ch. ix. 26); cf. 1 Cor. x. 11, "for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come." The term, *αἶων μέλλων*, is also used in this Epistle (vi. 5); cf. ii. 5, *τὴν οἰκουμένην τὴν μέλλουσαν*. For allusions elsewhere to the two periods, cf. Matt. xii. 32; Mark x. 30; Luke xviii. 30; xx. 35; Eph. i. 21; Titus ii. 12. Cf. also in Old Testament, Isa. ix. 6, where, for "Everlasting Father," Cod. Alex. has *πατήρ τοῦ μελλόντος αἰῶνος*. A subject of discussion has been the point of division between the two ages—whether the commencement of the Christian dispensation, ushered in by the exaltation of Christ, or his second advent. The conception in the Jewish mind, founded on Messianic prophecy, would, of course, be undefined. It would only be that the coming of the Messiah would inaugurate a new order of things. But how did the New Testament writers after Christ's ascension conceive the two ages? Did they regard themselves as living at the end of the former age or at the beginning of the new one? The passage before us does not help to settle the question, nor does ch. ix. 26; for the reference in both cases is to the historical manifestation of Christ before his ascension. But others of the passages cited above seem certainly to imply that "the coming age" was regarded as still future. It has been said, indeed, with regard to this apparent inference from some of them, that the writers were regarding their own age from the old Jewish standing-point when they spoke of it as future, or only used well-known phrases to denote the two ages, though they were no longer strictly applicable (see Alford's note on ch. ii. 5). But this explanation cannot well be made to apply to such passages as 1 Cor. x. 11 and Eph. i. 21, or to those in the Gospels. It would appear from them that it was not till the *παρουσία* (or, as it is designated in the pastoral Epistles, the *ἐπιφάνεια*) of Christ that "the coming age" of prophecy was regarded as destined to begin, ushering in "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. iii. 13).

Still, though "that day" was in the future, the first coming of Christ had been, as it were, its dawn, signifying its approach and preparing believers for meeting it. "The darkness was passing away; the true light was already shining" (1 John ii. 8). Hence the apostolic writers sometimes speak as if already in the "coming age," as being already citizens of heaven (Phil. iii. 20); as already "made to sit with Christ in the heavenly places" (Eph. i. 6); having already "tasted the powers of the age to come" (ch. vi. 5). In a certain sense they felt themselves in the new order of things, though, strictly speaking, they still regarded their own age as but the end of the old one, irradiated by the light of the new. To understand fully their language on the subject, we should remember that they supposed the second advent to be more imminent than it was. St. Paul, at one time certainly, thought that it might be before his own death (2 Cor. v. 4; 1 Thesa. iv. 15). Thus they might naturally speak of their own time as the conclusion of the former age, though regarding the second advent as the commencement of the new one. But the prolongation of "the end of these days," unforeseen by them, does not affect the essence of their teaching on the subject. In the Divine counsels "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Hath spoken unto us (more properly, *spoke to us*) in his Son. "His" is here properly supplied to give the meaning of *ἐν υἱῷ*. The rendering, a Son, which seems to have the advantage of literalism, would be misleading if it suggested the idea of one among many sons, or a son in the same sense in which others are sons. For though the designation, "son of God," is undoubtedly used in subordinate senses—applied e.g. to Adam, to angels, to good men, to Christians—yet what follows in the Epistle fixes its peculiar meaning here. The entire drift of the earlier part of the Epistle is to show that the idea involved in the word "Son," as applied to the Messiah in prophecy, is that of a relation to God far above that of the angels or of Moses, and altogether unique in its character. This idea must have been in the writer's mind when he selected the phrases of his exordium. Nor is the article required for the sense intended. Its omission, in fact, brings it out. *Ἐν τῷ υἱῷ* would have drawn especial attention to "the personage in whom God spoke; *ἐν υἱῷ* does so rather to the mode of the speaking—it is equivalent to "in one who was Son." Son-revelation (as afterwards explained), is contrasted with previous prophetic revelations (cf. for omission of the article before *υἱῶν*, ch. iii. 6; v. 8; vii. 28). Whom he appointed (or, constituted) heir

of all things; not, as in the A.V., "hath appointed." The verb is in the aorist, and here the indefinite sense of the aorist should be preserved. "Convenerit statim sub Filii nomen memoratur hæreditas" (Bengel). Two questions arise. (1) Was it in respect of his eternal Divinity, or of his manifestation in time, that the Son was appointed "Heir of all things"? (2) When is God to be conceived as so appointing him? i.e. What is the time, if any, to be assigned to the indefinite aorist? In answer to question (1) the second alternative is to be preferred. For (a) his eternal pre-existence has not yet been touched upon: it is introduced, as it were parenthetically, in the next and following clauses. (b) Though the term Son is legitimately used in theology to denote the eternal relation to the Father expressed by the *Ἀδὺς* of St. John, yet its application in this Epistle and in the New Testament generally (excepting, perhaps, the *μωυσεως υἱὸς* peculiar to St. John, on which see Bull, 'Jud. Eccl. Cath.' v. 4, etc.), is to the Word made flesh, to the Son as manifested in the Christ. And hence it is to him as such that we may conclude the heirship to be here assigned. (c) This is the view carried out in the sequel of the Epistle, where the Son is represented as attaining the universal dominion assigned to him after, and in consequence of, his human obedience. The conclusion of the exordium in itself expresses this; for it is not till after he had made purification of sins that he is said to have "sat down," etc.; i.e. entered on his inheritance; having become (*γενόμενος*, not *ᾤον*) "so much better," etc. This is the view of Chrysostom, Theodoret, and the Fathers generally (cf. the cognate passage, Phil. ii. 9). (2) It seems best to refer the aorist *ἔθηκεν*, not to any definite time, as that of the prophetic utterances afterwards cited, or that of the actual exaltation of Christ, but indefinitely to the eternal counsels, which were indeed declared and fulfilled in time, but were themselves *ἐν ἀρχῇ*. A similar use of the aorist, coupled with other aorists pointing to events in time, is found in Rom. viii. 29, 30. What this heirship of all things implies will appear in the sequel. By whom also he made the worlds. Interposed clause to complete the true conception of the Son; showing who and what he was originally and essentially through whom God "spoke" in time, and who, as Son, inherited. Here certainly, and in the expressions which follow, we have the same doctrine as that of the *Ἀδὺς* of St. John. And the testimony of the New Testament to the pre-existence and deity of Christ is the more striking from our finding the same essential idea under different forms of expression, and in writings differ-

ing so much from each other in character and style. He who appeared in the world as Christ is, in the first place, here said (as by St. John i. 3) to have been the Agent of creation; cf. Col. i. 15—17, where the original creative agency of "the Son of his love" is emphatically set forth, as well as his being "the Head of the body, the Church." This cognate passage is of weight against the view of interpreters who would take the one before us as referring to the initiation of the gospel ages; with respect to which view see also the quotation from Bull given below under ver. 3. Here *rois alaias* is equivalent to "the worlds," as in the A.V. For though the primary meaning of *alaias* has reference to time—limited in periods, or unlimited in eternity—it is used to denote also the whole system of things called into being by the Creator in time and through which alone we are able to conceive time. "*Oi alaias, aecula, pro rerum creatarum universitate est Hebraismus*" (Bull); cf. ch. xi. 3, *kataplisai rois alaias phmati theou*: also 1 Cor. ii. 7, *epi ton alaias*; and 2 Tim. i. 9; Titus i. 2, *epi xporon alaias*.

Ver. 3.—Who, being, etc. The participle *on*—not *geromenos*, as in ver. 4—denotes (as does still more forcibly *endoxen* in the cognate passage, Phil. ii. 6) what the Son is in himself essentially and independently of his manifestation in time. This transcendent idea is conveyed by two metaphorical expressions, differing in the metaphors used, but concurrent in meaning. The brightness of his glory. The word *doxa* (translated "glory"), though not in classical Greek carrying with it the idea of light, is used in the LXX. for the Hebrew *kabod*, which denotes the splendour surrounding God; manifested on Mount Sinai, in the holy of holies, in the visions of Ezekiel, etc.; and regarded as existing eternally "above the heavens" (cf. Exod. xxiv. 15; xl. 34; 1 Kings viii. 11; Ezek. viii. 4; Ps. xxiv. 7, 8, etc.). But the full blaze of this glory, accompanying "the face" of God, even Moses was not allowed to see; for no man could see him and live. Moses was hidden in a cleft of the rock while the Lord's glory passed by, and saw only its outskirts, i.e. the radiance left behind after it had passed; hearing meanwhile a proclamation of the moral attributes of Deity, by a perception of which he might best see God (Exod. xxxiii. 18, etc.). Similarly in the New Testament. There also, as on Sinai, in the tabernacle, and in prophetic vision, the glory of God is occasionally manifested under the form of an unearthly radiance; as in the vision of the shepherds (Luke ii. 9), the Transfiguration (Luke ix. 28, etc.), the ecstasy of Stephen (Acts vii. 55).

But in itself, as it surrounds "the face" of God, it is still invisible and unapproachable; cf. John i. 18, "No man hath seen God at any time;" 1 John i. 5, "God is Light;" 1 Tim. vi. 16, "Dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto (*phs aporiston*), whom no man hath seen nor can see." It denotes really, under the image of eternal, self-existent, unapproachable light, the ineffable Divine perfection, the essence of Deity, which is beyond human ken. "Sem-piterna ejus virtus et divinitas" (Bengel). Of this glory the Son is the *anabryasma*—a word not occurring elsewhere in the New Testament, but used by the Alexandrian writers. The verb *anabryō* means "to radiate," "to beam forth brightness;" and *anabryasma*, according to the proper meaning of nouns so formed, should mean the brightness beamed forth—this rather than its reflection from another object, as the sun's light is reflected from a cloud. So the noun is used in Wisd. vii. 26, as applied to *sofia*, which is there personified in a manner suggestive of the doctrine of the *Logos*: "*Autis gar esti thes tou theou dndueas kai anabryō thes tou pantokratopos dōxēs idiknēis . . . anabryasma gar esti phōs alōn.*" And Philo speaks of the breath of life breathed into man (Gen. ii. 7) as *theos makarias kai triamakarías phōs eis anabryasma* ('De Spec. Leg.' § 11). As, then, the irradiated brightness is to the source of light, so is the Son, in his eternal being, to the Father. It is, so to speak, begotten of the source, and of one substance with it, and yet distinguishable from it; being that through which its glory is made manifest, and through which it enlightens all things. The Person of the Son is thus represented, not as of one apart from God, irradiated by his glory, but as himself the sheen of his glory; cf. John i. 14, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father;" also John i. 4; i. 9. The above is the view taken by the Fathers generally, and expressed in the Church's Creed, *phs ek phōs*. And express Image of his substance; not "of his person," as in the A.V. The latter rendering is due to the long-accepted theological use of the word *hypostasis* in the sense of *personal subsistence*, as applied to each of the Three in One. What the Latins called *persons* the Greeks at length agreed to call *hypostasis*, while the Greek *ousia* (equivalent to *essentia*) and the Latin *substantia* (though the latter word etymologically corresponds with *hypostasis*) were used as equivalents in meaning. But it was long after the apostolic age that this scientific use of the word became fixed. After as well as before the Nicene Council *ousia* was sometimes used to denote what we mean by *person*, and *hypostasis* to denote

what we mean by the *substance* of the Godhead; and hence came misunderstandings during the Arian controversy. Bull ('Def. Fid. Nic.,' ii. 9. 11) gives a catena of instances of this uncertain usage. The definite doctrine of the Trinity, though apparent in the New Testament, had not as yet come under discussion at the time of the writing of this Epistle, or been as yet scientifically formulated; and hence we must take the word in its general and original sense, the same as that now attached to its etymological equivalent, *substantia*. It means literally, "a standing under," and is used (1) in a physical sense, for "foundation," as in Ps. lxx. 2, "I sink in deep mire where there is no standing," where the LXX. has *ὑπόστασις*; (2) metaphorically, for "confidence" or "certainty," as below, ch. iii. 15 and 2 Cor. ix. 4; (3) metaphysically, for that which underlies the phenomena of things and constitutes their essential being. Of the *substance*, understood in the last sense, of God the Son is the *χαράκτῆρ*, which word expresses a similar kind of relation to the Divine substance as *ἀνατύπωμα* does to the Divine glory. Derived from *χαράσσω* (equivalent to "mark," "grave," or "stamp," with an engraven or imprinted character), its proper meaning is the perceptible image on the material so stamped or engraved, of which it thus becomes the *χαράκτῆρ*. Thus the "image and superscription" on a coin is its *χαράκτῆρ*, manifesting what the coin is. The instance of the tribute money (Matt. xxii. 20) at once occurs to us: our Lord pointed to the *χαράκτῆρ* on the coin as manifesting its *ὑπόστασις*, as being Cæsar's money. Thus also the lineaments of a countenance are called its *χαράκτῆρ*, as in Herod., i. 116, 'Ο *χαράκτῆρ* τοῦ προσώπου. A passage in Philo is illustrative of the sense intended; and it is to be observed (both with regard to the expression before us and to the preceding *ἀνατύπωμα*) that the Alexandrian theologians are important guides to the interpretation of phrases in this Epistle, their influence on its modes of thought and expression being perceptible. He says ('De Plant. Noe.' § 5) that Moses called the rational soul the image (*εἰκόνα*) of the Divine and Invisible, as being *ὁμοειδὲς καὶ ὁμοειδὲς ὁμοειδὲς Θεοῦ*, ὅς δ' *χαράκτῆρ* ἐστὶν ὁ εἰκὼν λόγος. Here, be it observed, *χαράκτῆρ* is used for the form or lineament of the Divine seal itself, not for the copy stamped on the plastic material. And it is applied, as here, to the "Eternal Word," as being the manifestation of what the unseen Godhead is. Hence it would be wrong to understand the word, as some have done, as denoting the form impressed by one substance on another—as though

the impression left on the wax were the *χαράκτῆρ* of the seal. This misconception would mislead (as might also *ἀνατύπωμα*, if rendered "reflection") in that it would seem to represent the Son as distinct from God, though stamped with his likeness and irradiated by his glory. Arian views about the Son, or even mere humanitarian views about the Christ, might thus seem countenanced. The two words *ἀνατύπωμα* and *χαράκτῆρ*, as has been said, express a similar relation to *δόξα* and *ὑπόστασις* respectively, and convey the same general idea of the Son's eternal relation to the Father. But both are, of course, but figures, each necessarily inadequate, of the inscrutable reality. If we may distinguish between them, it may be said that the former especially intimates the view of the operation and energy of the Godhead being through the Son, while the latter more distinctly brings out the idea of the Son being the Manifestation of what the Godhead is, and especially of what it is to us. And upholding all things. We have here still the present participle, denoting the intrinsic operation of him who was revealed as Son. Though the word *φέρειν*, in the sense of upholding or sustaining creation, does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament, it can hardly have any other meaning here, considering the context. We find a similar use of it in Numb. xi. 14; Deut. i. 9, "to bear (*φέρειν*) all this people alone." And in the later Greek and rabbinical writers parallels are found. Chrysostom interprets *φέρειν* as meaning *κυβερνᾶν*, τὰ διακρίνοντα συγκρατᾶν, which comes to the same thing as "upholding" or "sustaining." The meaning is that not only were "the worlds" made through him; in his Divine nature he ever "upholds" the "all things" which were made through him, and of which, as Son, he was appointed "Heir;" cf. Col. i. 17, "And in him all things consist." And this upholding operation must not be supposed to have been in abeyance during the period of his humiliation. He was still what he had been eternally, though he had "emptied himself" of the state and prerogatives of Deity (Phil. ii. 7); cf. (though the text is somewhat doubtful) John iii. 13, "The Son of man, which is (*ἐστὶν*) in heaven." By the word (*ἐκμεν*) of his power is an expression elsewhere used of the *voluntas efficiens* of Deity—the utterance of Divine power; cf. ch. xi. 3, "The worlds were framed by the Word (*ἐκμεν*) of God." The writer could hardly have used it in this connection, if speaking of a created being. As to the reference of "his" before "power," whether to the subject of the sentence or to God, there is the same ambiguity in the Greek as in the English translation. Even

if *αὐτοῦ* be intended, and not *αὐτοῖς* (and the former is most likely, since the pronoun, though it be reflective, is not emphatically so), it may with grammatical propriety refer either, like the previous *αὐτοῦ*, to God, or to him who thus upholds all things. In either case the general meaning of the clause remains the same. Enough has been said on the whole series of phrases which is thus concluded to show the untenableness of the Socinian interpretation, which would refer them only to Christ in the flesh and to the Christian dispensation. On such interpretation of the first of them Bull remarks, "Interpretatio Socinistarum, Deum nempe dici per Filiam sæcula condidisse, quod per ipsum genus humanum reformavit et restauravit, et in novum quemdam statum transtulit, prodigiosum est commentum. Sane juramento aliquis tuto affirmare possit, ex Hebræis, ad quos scripta fuit illa epistola, ne unum quidem fuisse, qui scriptoris verba hoc sensu intellexerit, aut vel per somnium cogitaverit, per *robs alarvas, sæcula*, significatum fuisse tantum genus humanum, nodum ejus partem illam, cui tunc temporis evangelii lux effulserat" ('Jud. Eocl. Cath.,' v. 8). When he had made purification of sins. (So, according to the best-supported and now generally accepted text.) The aorist is now resumed, denoting an act in time—the act accomplished by him as incarnate Son, previous to and necessary for his entering on the inheritance appointed to him as such. This act, the grand purpose of the Incarnation, was *atonement*. There can be no doubt that the cleansing effected by atonement, and not the mere *moral* reformation of believers, is meant here by *purification of sins*. The sequel of the Epistle, being, as aforesaid, the full expression of the drift of the exordium, is sufficient proof of this. For in it Christ is exhibited at great length as the true High Priest of humanity, accomplishing truly what the Jewish priesthood signified; and as having "sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens," in virtue of his accomplished atonement (ch. viii. 1; x. 12). Nor would the Hebrew readers to whom the Epistle was addressed be likely to understand *καθαρισμὸν* ("purification") in any other sense than this. The verb *καθαρίσκειν* is the LXX. equivalent for the Hebrew *קָדַשׁ*, frequent in the Old Testament for ceremonial cleansing, the result of atoning sacrifice; in which sense it is accordingly used in ch. x. of this Epistle. The theory of the Jewish ceremonial law was that the whole congregation, including the priests themselves, were too much polluted by sin to approach the holy God who dwelt between the cherubim. Therefore sacrifices were ordained to make atonement for them. The word for "making

atonement for" (Greek, *ἁγιασμός*) is in Hebrew *קָדַשׁ*, which means properly "to cover;" i.e. to cover sin from the sight of God. And the result of such atonement was called "purification," or "cleansing." This appears clearly in Lev. xvi., where the ceremonies of the great Day of Atonement are detailed. After an account of the various sacrifices of atonement, for the high priest and his house, for the people, and for the holy place itself polluted by their sins, we read (ver. 19), "And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it [i.e. the altar] with his finger seven times, and *cleanses* it (*קָדַשׁ*), and hallow it from the uncleanness (*טָמְאָה*) of the children of Israel." And finally (ver. 30), "For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to *cleanse* you (*קָדַשׁ*), that ye may be *clean* from all your sins before the Lord." It is to be observed, further, that it is especially the meaning of the ceremonial of the Day of Atonement that Christ is spoken of afterwards in the Epistle as having fulfilled. For the phrase, *καθαρισμὸν ἁμαρτιῶν*, cf. Job vii. 21, *Διὰ τὸν οὐκ ἐποίησεν τῆς ἀνομίας λῆθην, καὶ καθαρισμὸν τῆς ἀμαρτίας μου*. Its meaning in the Epistle may be that Christ, by his death, brought into being and established a permanent purification of sins—"a fountain open for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. xiii. 1)—in his blood, which is regarded as now ever offered at the heavenly mercy-seat (ch. ix. 12) and sprinkled on the redeemed below (ch. ix. 14, 22). Thus the distinction, observed above, between the atonement (*ἁγιασμός*), of sacrifice and its application for cleansing (*καθαρισμὸν*) would be preserved (cf. 1 John i. 7 and Rev. vii. 14). *Sat down*; i.e. entered on his inheritance of all things; not simply in the sense of resuming his pristine glory, but of obtaining the prominence denoted in prophecy as appointed to the Son, human as well as Divine, and won by obedience and accomplished atonement. And this his supreme exaltation (as will be seen hereafter) carries with it the idea of an exaltation of humanity, of which he was the High Priest and Representative. But be it observed that there is no change in the subject of the sentence. He who "sat down on high" after making purification is the same with him through whom the worlds were made, and whose eternal Divinity has been expressed by the present participles. This identification supports the orthodox position of there being but one personality in Christ, notwithstanding the two natures, and justifies, against Nestorianism, the term *θεοτόκος* as applied to the blessed Virgin, with other cognate expressions accepted in orthodox theology, such as, "God suffered," though in his human,

not his Divine nature; "God shed his blood" (cf. Phil. ii. 9, etc.). On the right hand of the Majesty on high. The expression is taken from Ps. cx. 1, afterwards cited in this Epistle, and prominently referred to in like manner by St. Paul. The figure is suggested by the custom of Oriental kings, who placed at the right hand of the throne a son whom they associated with themselves in the prerogatives of royalty. Occurring as it does first in a Messianic psalm, the phrase is never applied to the Son's original relation to the Father "before the ages," but only to his exaltation as the Christ (on which see Bleek). The same idea seems expressed by our Lord's own words, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. xxviii. 18). But in the end, according to St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 24, 28), this peculiar "kingship" of the Son will cease, the redemptive purpose being accomplished. It is to be observed that, both here and afterwards (ch. viii. 1), a fine periphrasis is used for "right hand of God:" "the right hand of the Majesty on high" and "the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." This may be regarded, not only as characteristic of the eloquent style of the Epistle, but also as implying an avoidance of too local or physical a view of the session spoken of. It is apparent elsewhere how the writer sees in the figures used to denote heavenly things only signs, level to our comprehension, of corresponding realities beyond our ken.

Ver. 4.—Having become by so much better than the angels as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they (*διαπορισθεν υπ' αγγελοις*). (For the same Greek form of comparison, see ch. i. 9; iii. 8.) "*Παρα* ingentem prater ceteros excellentiam denotat" (Bengel). This verse, though, in respect of grammatical construction, it is the conclusion of the exordium, serves as the thesis of the first section of the argument to follow, the drift of which is to show the Son's superiority to the angels. The mention of the angels comes naturally after the allusion to Ps. cx., viewed and quoted as it is afterwards in connection with Ps. viii., in which "*a little lower than the angels*" is taken to denote the state *previous* to the exaltation; and it is preparatory also for the argument that follows. The more distinguished name, expressing the measure of superiority to the angels, is (as the sequel shows) the name of Son, assigned (as aforesaid) to the Messiah in prophecy, and so, with all that it implies, "inherited" by him in time according to the Divine purpose. Observe the perfect, "*hath inherited*," instead of the aorist as hitherto, denotes, with the usual force of the Greek tense, the continuance of the inheritance obtained. If we have entered into the view

all along taken by the writer, we shall see no difficulty in the Son being said to have become better than the angels at the time of his exaltation, as though he had been below them before. So he had in respect of his assumed humanity, and it is to the Son denoted in prophecy to be humanly manifested in time that the whole sentence in its main purport refers. As such, having been, with us, lower than the angels, he became greater, the interposed references to his eternal personality retaining their full force notwithstanding. But why should the name of Son in itself imply superiority to the angels? Angels themselves are, in the Old Testament, called "sons of God." It has been suggested that the writer of the Epistle was not aware of the angels being so designated, since the LXX., from which he invariably quotes, renders *αγγελοι* by *δγγελοι*. But this is not so invariably. In Gen. vi. 1; Ps. xxix. 1; and lxxxix. 7, we find *υιοι Θεου*. And, whatever be the application of the words in each of these passages, they at any rate occur in the LXX. as denoting others than the Messiah. Nor, in any case, would it be easily supposable that one so versed in biblical lore as the writer must have been had been thus misled in so important a point of his argument. The fact is that his argument, properly understood, is quite consistent with a full knowledge of the fact that others as well as the Messiah are so designated. For it is not merely the term "Son" as applied to the Messiah in prophecy, but the unique manner in which it is so applied, that is insisted on in what follows. The form of his commencement shows this. He does not say, "Whom, except the Messiah, did he ever call Son?" but, "To which of the angels did he ever speak as follows, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee?" In language generally the meaning of a word may depend very materially on the context in which it occurs and other determining circumstances. Indeed, the mere use of the title in the singular, "my Son," carries with it a different idea from its use in the plural of a class of beings. But this is not all. A series of passages from the Old Testament is adduced by way of expressly showing that the sonship assigned to the Messiah carries with it the idea of a relation to God altogether beyond any ever assigned to angels. Such is the position of the writer. We shall see in the sequel how he makes it good.

Ver. 5—ch. iii. 1.—THE SON SUPERIOR TO THE ANGELS. Here the argumentation of the Epistle begins, the thesis of the first section of the argument having been given, as aforesaid, in the preceding verse, that "the Son is superior to the angels." The

second section begins at ch. iii. 1, the thesis being that "the Son is superior to Moses." Through *angels* and *Moses* the Law was given: "Ordaigned through angels in the hand of a mediator" (Gal. iii. 19), the "mediator" being Moses. To show that the Son, in the Old Testament itself, is represented as above both, is to show, what it is the main purpose of the whole Epistle to establish, that the gospel, given through the Son, is above the Law, and intended to supersede it. The conclusion is that the gospel stands in the same relation to the Law as does the Son to angels, who are but "ministering spirits," and to Moses, who was but a "servant." With regard to the agency of angels in the giving of the Law, we do not find it so evident in the Old Testament as might have been expected from the references to it in the New. The "angel of Lord," who appeared to Moses (Exod. iii. 2) and went before the people (Exod. xiv. 19; xxiii. 20, etc.), seems in the earlier books of the Bible to signify a certain presence and manifestation of the Lord himself, rather than a created minister of his will (see Gen. xvi. 7, 13; xxii. 15, 16; Exod. iii. 2, 4; xxiii. 20, 21; cf. Acts vii. 31, 35, 38); and this has been identified by theologians with the Word, not yet incarnate, through whom all Divine communications have been made to men. It is to be observed, however, that, after the sin of the golden calf, a distinction seems to be made between the presence of the Lord with his people and that of the angel to be thenceforth sent before them (Exod. xxxiii. 2, 3). Ebrard sees in the "angel of the Lord" generally, though understood as signifying a Divine presence, a justification of the statement that the Law was given "through angels," on the ground that, though God did so manifest *himself*, it was not a direct manifestation, as in the Son, but through forms borrowed from the sphere of the angels. It was an *angelophany*, denoting an unseen Divine presence, not a true *theophany*. The only distinct allusion to "angels," in the plural, in connection with the giving of the Law, is in Deut. xxxiii. 2, "He came with ten thousands of saints;" with which comp. Ps. lxxviii. 17. But there is no doubt that it came afterwards to be the accepted rabbinical view that the dispensers of the Law were angels

—whether as attendants on the Divine Majesty, or as agents of the fiery phenomena on Mount Sinai (natural operations being often attributed to angels), or as the utterers of the voice that was heard. "*Locutus est Deus per angelos*" (Bengel). And the writers of the New Testament plainly recognize this view (see below, ch. ii. 2; Acts vii. 53; Gal. iii. 19). Hence our author takes for granted that his readers will understand and recognize it, and so implies it in his argument, expressing, as it does, a true conception of the nature of the Mosaic dispensation, and especially of its relation to the gospel. To resume our view of the argument that follows. The first section (as aforesaid) is from ch. i. 5 to iii. 1, having for its thesis the *superiority of the Son to angels*. The second section is from ch. iii. 1 to v. 1, having for its thesis the *superiority of the Son to Moses*. Each section consists of two main divisions, between which in each case an appropriate exhortation is interposed; the first division in each case treating of what the Son is in his own person, the second of his work for man; and both sections leading separately to the conclusion that he is the *High Priest of humanity*. Then, in ch. v., the subject of his priesthood is taken up. Ebrard happily illustrates the symmetrical plan of the argument thus: "The author, having thus been led from these two different starting-points to the idea of the ἀρχιερεύς, now proceeds to place on the two first parts, which may be viewed as the pillars of the arch, the third part, which forms the keystone." In this third part it begins to be shown, at ch. v. 1, how Christ fulfilled in his humanity the essential idea of priesthood. But, for reasons that will appear, the full doctrine of his eternal priesthood is not entered upon till ch. vii. 1—x. 19, which may be called the central portion of the whole Epistle. The remainder (ch. x. 20—end) may be distinguished from the rest as being the distinctly hortatory part (though hortation has been frequently interposed in the argument), being mainly devoted to practical application of the doctrine that has been established. The following plan of the argument of the first two sections, showing the parallelism between them, may assist us in entering into it as it proceeds:—

SECTION I.

Thesis: Christ superior to the angels.

Division 1 (ch. i. 5—ii. 1).

The name Son, as applied to the typical theocratic kings, and in its final reference and full meaning (as you all acknowledge) pointing to the Messiah, expresses a position altogether above any assigned anywhere to angels. The Son is represented as one asso-

SECTION II.

Thesis: Christ superior to Moses.

Division 1 (ch. iii. 1—7).

Moses is represented in the Old Testament as but a *servant* in the house of God. The Son is *lord over* the house.

ciated with God in his majesty, a sharer of his everlasting throne. Angels are referred to only as ministering spirits or attendant worshippers at the Son's advent.

Interposed exhortation (ch. ii. 1—5).

This being so, beware of not appreciating the revelation now given in the Son. If transgression of the Law given through angels was so severely visited, what will be the consequence of neglecting *this*, accredited to us as it has been?

Division 2 (ch. ii. 5—iii. 1).

The Son also, but never angels, is denoted in prophecy as Lord of the *coming age*. For the eighth psalm (based on and carrying out the idea of the account in Genesis of the original creation) assigns a supremacy over all created things to man. Man, as he is now, does not fulfil the ideal of his destiny. But Christ, as Son of man, in his exaltation, does. And in him man attains his destined dignity forfeited through sin. His humiliation, suffering and death were for the purpose of thus raising man. His humiliation with this end was a design worthy of God, and in accordance with the purport of Messianic prophecy. For such prophecy intimates association and sympathy of the Messiah with his human brethren. Thus Christ, the Son, is the sympathizing *High Priest of humanity*.

Ver. 5.—For to which of the angels said he at any time. Observe the form of the question, which has been already noticed. It is not, "When were angels ever called sons?" but to this effect: "To which of them did he ever speak (individually) in the following remarkable terms?" The first quotation is from Ps. ii. 7; the second from 2 Sam. vii. 14. The second having had undoubtedly a primary reference to Solomon, and the first presumably to some king of Israel, probably to David, we may here properly pause to consider the principle of the application of such passages to Christ. It must be allowed that, not only in this Epistle, but in the New Testament generally, sayings which had a primary reference to events or personages in the past, are applied directly to Christ; and in some cases where the justness of the application may not be to all of us at first sight obvious. With regard to this usage, Bengel says, "Veri interpretes verborum divinatorum sunt apostoli; etiam si nos sine illis talen sententiam non assigneremur." But such applications are plainly not arbitrary. They rest on a principle of interpretation which it is of importance for us to understand. First, we may observe that the method was not originated by the New Testament writers; it was one received among the Jews of their time, who saw throughout the Old Testament anti-

Interposed exhortation (ch. iii. 7—iv. 1).

This being so, beware of hardening your hearts, like the Israelites under Moses. If they failed, through unbelief, of entering into the rest offered to *them*, you may similarly fail of entering into the rest intended for *you*.

Division 2 (ch. iv. 1—v. 1).

A rest, symbolized by that of the promised land, *is* still offered to you, and you *may* enter into it. The ninetyeth psalm shows that the rest into which Joshua led the Israelites was not the final one intended for God's people. The true rest is the rest of God himself ("my rest," Ps. xc.), spoken of in the account of the creation—the sabbath rest of eternity. Christ, after sharing our human trials, has passed into that eternal rest, and won an entrance into it for us. Thus, again, a renewed exhortation being interposed, Christ, the Son, is again set forth as the sympathizing *High Priest of humanity*.

cipations of the Messiah. This appears both from rabbinical literature and also from the New Testament itself. For instance, the priests and scribes consulted by Herod (Matt. ii. 5) referred Micah v. 2 as a matter of course to the Messiah; and the Pharisees (Matt. xxii. 44) never thought of disputing the application of Ps. cx. to him. And not only so. The Old Testament itself suggests and exemplifies such applications. For students of the prophetic writings must be aware how utterances that had a primary fulfilment in one age are sometimes taken up in a subsequent one as though yet to be fulfilled, their scope enlarged, and their final reference often thrown forward to "that day"—the Messianic age—which alone terminates the view of the later prophets. Now, it has been said, in explanation of this mode of treatment, that prophecy often had a double meaning, referring partly to one thing and partly to another; or several meanings, with reference to several different things. But this way of putting the matter is unsatisfactory. Bacon better hit the mark, when, in a well-known passage in his 'Advancement of Learning' (bk. ii.), he spoke of "that latitude which is agreeable and familiar unto Divine prophecies, being of the nature of their Author, with whom a thousand years are but as one day, and therefore are not

fulfilled punctually at once, but have springing and germinant accomplishment throughout many ages; though the height or fulness of them may refer to some one age." We may put it thus: It was of the nature of prophetic inspiration to lift the seer above and beyond his immediate subject to the contemplation of some grand *ideal*, which it suggested to his vision, and more or less perfectly fulfilled. He has, for instance, as the basis of his vision, a David, a Solomon, a Hezekiah, or a Zerubbabel; he has as its framework the circumstances of his own time or of the time near at hand; but we find his language, as he proceeds, rising far above his vision's original scope, and applicable to those comprised within it only so far as they embody and realize the ideal which they represent to his mind. Hence the taking up of old prophecies by succeeding prophets, their enlargement and reapplication to new fulfillments; and this, too, in terms transcending the reality of these new fulfillments; as, for instance, when Isaiah, taking up the idea of Nathan's message to David (2 Sam. vii.), applies it apparently to a son and a reign to be looked for in his own age, but at length in language which can have no other than a Messianic reference (Isa. ix. 6, etc.; xl. 1, etc.; cf. Jer. xxxiii. 15). Hence, lastly, the application in the New Testament of all such ancient utterances at once to Christ, as being the final and complete fulfilment of the ideal of prophecy, the true Antitype of all the types. A clear perception of this view of the drift of prophecy will remove difficulties that have been felt as to the application of many quotations from the Old Testament, in this Epistle and elsewhere, to Christ. Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee; a quotation from Ps. ii. 7. This psalm is expressly quoted as David's in Acts iv. 25, and has internal evidence of being his, and of having had primary reference to his reign. For the mention of Zion (ver. 6) precludes an earlier date, while the circumstances of warfare alluded to do not agree with the peaceful reign of Solomon, nor the picture of undivided empire with any period after the secession of the ten tribes. Further, the rising and consequent subjugation by David of subject races, described in 2 Sam. viii., presents to us a state of things very likely to have suggested the psalm; and to this period of David's reign it is usually referred with probability by modern commentators. But the question of date and authorship is not material to our view of the prophetic meaning of the psalm. Taking it to be David's, we find as follows: There is a rebellious confederation of subject kings against the dominion of the King of Israel, who is spoken of as "the Anointed" of the Lord. In view of their hostile preparations, the Lord in heaven

is conceived as laughing to scorn their devices against him whom he himself had enthroned on Zion. Then the king speaks, "I will declare the decree [or, 'I will tell of a decree']; the Lord said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and for thy possession the ends of the earth." Then follows an admonition to the rebels to do homage to this Son, submission to whom is submission to the Lord, and whose anger is as the Lord's anger. Now, it is evident that the language used transcends *literal* application to any earthly king. Hence some commentators have been led to suppose that it had no even primary reference to one, being simply prophetic of the Messiah, though suggested by the circumstances of David's day. Thus Ebrard, supporting his view by the assumption (which is usually made) of the message of Nathan to David (2 Sam. vii. 14) being the "decree" referred to in the psalm, and the foundation of the confidence expressed in it. He argues that it was not to David, but to his posterity (נָחֶד), that the position of sonship was assigned, and eternal dominion promised; and hence that David in this psalm (which he considers to have been certainly by him) must have been speaking, not in his own name, but in that of his seed after him, looking adoringly forward to the fulfilment of that glorious hope in the *distant future* (2 Sam. vii. 19). Thus, he concludes, the insurrection of the Syrians forms merely the *occasion*, but not the *object* and *import*, of the second psalm. But, even if the message of Nathan were certainly the basis of the idea of the psalm, we find an instance of the express application of that message to David himself, as well as to his posterity, in Ps. lxxxix. (see vers. 20—28). It may be, however, that the reference in the psalm is to some Divine intimation, possibly to some prophecy or oracular utterance, delivered to David himself at the time of the inauguration of his own sovereignty, and long before Nathan's message. In any case, it is in accordance with the genius of prophecy, as above explained, that the words should have had a primary reference to David himself, so far forth as he imperfectly fulfilled their meaning. The main thing to be observed is that they represent an ideal of sonship and unlimited sovereignty beyond any that could, as a matter of fact, be considered as fulfilled in David. And this view of its meaning, suggested by the psalm itself, is confirmed by the use made of it in later Scripture. For it is evident that this psalm, together with the passage from 2 Sam. vii. (to be cited next) is made the basis of a long series of Messianic prophecies (cf. 2 Sam. xxiii. 1, etc.; Ps. cx.; lxxxix.; cxxxii.; Isa.

vii.—ix.; xi. 1, 10; Jer. xlii. 5; xxxiii. 15; Micah iv.—v.; Zech. vi. 12, etc.). Its application to Christ in the New Testament is distinct and frequent (cf. Acts iv. 25; xiii. 33; Rev. ii. 27; xii. 5; xix. 15). As to the phrase, "This day have I begotten thee," there is a difference of view among both ancient and modern expositors. The word "begotten" (*γενένηκα*) naturally suggests *μωυγενής*, and is hence taken by some as referring to the eternal generation of the Son; in which case it can have had no application in any conceivable sense to the human type. "This day" has also in this case to be explained as denoting the ever-present to-day of eternity. So Origen, in a striking passage, "It is said to him by God, to whom it is always to-day. For God has no evening, nor (as I deem) any morning, but the time which is coextensive with his own unbegotten and eternal life is (if I may so speak) the day in which the Son is begotten, there being thus found no beginning of his generation, as neither is there of the day." Athanasius takes the same view; also Basil, Primasius, Thomas Aquinas, and many others. The main objection to it is the inapplicability of such a meaning of the words, even in a subordinate sense, to David or any other king of Israel. Alford, indeed, urges that this meaning agrees best with the context in the Epistle, on the ground that the eternal being of the Son, having been stated in the exordium, might be expected to be referred to in the proof. But this is hardly to the point. The writer has now begun his argument from the Old Testament, and is engaged in showing the idea involved in the term Son as applied therein to the Messiah. This, therefore, and not what he has said previously, is what we have to regard in our interpretation; and the most obvious view of the phrase, as it occurs in the psalm itself, is to regard it as a figure denoting forcibly the *paternity* of God; cf. Jer. ii. 27, "They say to the wood, Thou art my father; to the stone, Thou hast begotten me." It expresses the idea that the "Son of God" spoken of derives his existence as such from him, and not from human ancestry. Chrysostom, among the ancients, understands the phrase as thus referring to the sonship assigned to the Messiah in time, and not to his eternal being. This view being taken, "this day," in reference to the king, may mean the day of the "decree," or that of his enthronement on Mount Zion. In reference to Christ it has been variously understood of the time of his incarnation, or resurrection, or ascension. If it be thought necessary to assign any definite time to it in its application to Christ, the view of its being the day of the resurrection is supported by such passages as Col. i. 18, *πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν*

νεκρῶν; and Rom. i. 4, *τοῦ ἀποθνήσκοντος υἱοῦ Θεοῦ ἐκ νεκρῶν* . . . ἐξ ἀναστρέψεως νεκρῶν; cf. Acts ii. 30 and Acts xiii. 32, etc., "The promise that was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again: as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." This last text, be it observed, is almost conclusive against the eternal generation being understood as referred to; as is also the application of the same text *infra*, ch. v. 5, where it is quoted in proof of Christ's appointment to the eternal priesthood. ["The title of *begetting* is oftentimes in sacred language to be measured, not by the scale of philosophers' or naturalists' dialect, but of moral or civil language or interpretation. For they that are sons by adoption only, or next heirs by reversion to a crown or dignity, are said to be begotten of those which adopt them, or of whom they be the immediate heirs or successors: and in this sense in the sacred genealogy (Matt. i. 12) Jeconiah is said to have begotten Salathiel. So that David upon his own occasions (whether upon his anointing to the crown of Judah in Hebron, or of Israel in Zion) might in the literal sense avouch these words of himself, 'I will preach the law whercof the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee.' For David to call the day of his coronation, or of his designation to the crown of Judah, or of all Israel, his *birthday*, or *begetting of God*, by whose special power and providence he was crowned, is not so harsh as some haply would deem it that either know not or consider not that it was usual in other states or kingdoms beside Judah to celebrate two *natales dies*, two solemn nativities or birthdays in honour of their kings and emperors: the one they called *diem natalem imperatoris*, the other *diem natalem imperii*; the one the birthday of the emperor when he was born of his natural mother, the other the birthday of him as he was emperor, which we call the *coronation day*. The reason might hold more peculiar in David than in any other prince, because he was the first of all the seed of Abraham that took possession of the hill of Zion, and settled the kingdom of Judah, prophesied of by his father Jacob, upon himself and his posterity. . . . Thus *Ego hodie genui te*, with submission of my opinion to better judgment, is a prediction typically prophetic, which kind of prediction, as hath been observed before, is the most conclusive; and this one of the highest rank in that kind; that is, an oracle truly meant of David according to the literal sense, and yet fulfilled of Christ, the Son of God, by his resurrection from the dead, both ac-

cording to the most exquisite literal and the mystical and principally intended sense" (T. Jackson's 'Works,' bk. ix. ch. xxxi. 6, 7, Oxford edition, 1844, vol. viii. p. 411).] And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son (2 Sam. vii. 14); from Nathan's message to David, which has been spoken of above. The words do not in themselves express so unique a sonship as those used in the psalm; but, viewed in connection with the psalm, with their own context, and with subsequent prophecy, they suggest the same meaning. David had formed the design of building a temple; Nathan, by the word of the LORD, forbids his doing so, but tells him that his "seed" after him should build a house for the LORD's Name, and that the LORD would establish the throne of his kingdom for ever." Then comes the text, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son;" followed by, "If he commit iniquity, I will chastise him with the rod of men . . . but my mercy shall not depart away from him. . . . And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever." Now, there can be no doubt that there was a primary and partial fulfilment of this promise in Solomon, who built the temple after David's death. He took it to himself, so far as it was applicable to him, after his completion of the temple (1 Kings viii. 17, etc.). But it is equally evident that its meaning could not be exhausted in him. The eternity assigned to the throne of the kingdom points to a distant as well as an immediate fulfilment, and the word translated "seed" (Hebrew, *zera*), though applicable in a concrete sense to an individual offspring (cf. Gen. iv. 25; 1 Sam. i. 11), is properly a collective noun, denoting "posterity," and thus naturally lends itself to a far-reaching application. The consideration, however, of especial weight in support of such application is that psalmists and prophets cease not to make this original promise the basis of Messianic prophecy. See, not only Ps. ii., which may or may not refer to it, but also Ps. lxxxix. and cxxxii., together with other passages which have been referred to in connection with the second psalm. Thus we may properly apply to this particular passage the view of the meaning of prophecy which has been set forth in general terms above, according to which we must regard Solomon, with respect to the sonship assigned to him as well as to his kingdom and the house which he was to build, as but a type and imperfect realization of a grand ideal to be in due time fulfilled.

Ver. 6.—And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. The most obvious translation of the Greek

here seems at first sight to be, "But whenever he [*i.e.* God] shall again bring [or, 'bring back'] the Firstborn into the inhabited world, he saith;" *ὅταν εἰσαγάγῃ* denoting the indefiniteness of future time, and the position of *πᾶν* connecting it most naturally with *εἰσαγάγῃ*. If such be the force of *πᾶν*, the reference must be to the second advent; which, however, is not suggested by the context, in which there has been no mention of a first advent, but only of the assignation to the Messiah of the name of Son. This supposed reference to a second advent may be avoided by disconnecting *πᾶν* in sense from *εἰσαγάγῃ*, and taking it (as in the verse immediately preceding, and elsewhere in the Epistle) as only introducing a new quotation. And the Greek will bear this interpretation, though the order of the words, taken by themselves, is against it. The "Firstborn" (*πρωτότοκος*) is evidently the Son previously spoken of; the word is so applied (Pa. lxxxix. 27) in a passage undoubtedly founded on the text last quoted. The same word is applied in the New Testament to Christ, as "the Firstborn among many brethren," "the Firstborn of every creature," "the Firstborn from the dead" (Rom. viii. 29; Col. i. 15, 18). And the idea conveyed by these passages may have been in the writer's mind, and intended to be understood by his Christian readers. But for the immediate purpose of his argument he may be supposed to refer only to this designation as applied in the Old Testament to the Son already spoken of. Thus the meaning may be, "But, again, with reference to the time when he shall introduce this Son, the Firstborn, into our inhabited world, he speaks thus of the angels." Or it may be, "But whenever he shall bring a second time into the world the Firstborn who has already once appeared, he speaks thus of the angels." But the first meaning seems more suitable to the general context. The force of the writer's argument is the same, whichever view we take; the point being that, at the time of the advent of the Son, whatever advent may be meant, the angels appear only as attendant worshippers. As to the understood nominative to "saith," we may suppose it to be "God," as in ver. 5. But it is to be observed that *λέγει*, without an expressed nominative, is a usual formula for introducing a scriptural quotation. The question remains—What is the text quoted, and how can it be understood as bearing the meaning here assigned to it? In the Hebrew Bible we find nothing like it, except in Ps. xvii. 7, "Worship him, all ye gods," A.V.; where the LXX. has *προσκυνήσατε αὐτῷ πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι Θεοῦ*. But in Deut. xxxii. 43 we find in the LXX., though not in the Masoretic text, καὶ

προσκυνήσαντες αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι Θεοῦ: the very words, including the introductory καὶ, which are quoted. Hence, the quotations in this Epistle being mainly from the LXX., we may conclude that this is the text referred to. It occurs towards the end of the Song of Moses, in connection with its concluding picture of the Lord's final triumph, in which the nations are called upon to rejoice with his people, when he would avenge the blood of his servants, and render vengeance to his adversaries, and make atonement for (Greek, *καταθαρίσῃ*) his land and for his people. Viewed in the light of later prophecy, this triumph is identified with that of the Messiah's kingdom, and is therefore that of the time of bringing "the Firstborn into the world." Cf. Rom. xv. 10, where "Rejoice, ye Gentiles," etc., from the same passage, is applied to the time of Christ. It is no objection to the quotation that, as it stands in the Epistle, "the Firstborn," though not mentioned in the original, seems to be regarded as the *object* of the angels' worship. The passage is simply cited as it stands, the reader being left to draw his own inference; and the main point of it is that the angels in "that day" are not, like the Son, sharers of the throne, but only worshippers.

Ver. 7.—And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. A further intimation of the position assigned in the Old Testament to angels, contrasted by means of *πνεῦμα* and *πῦρ*, with further quotations with reference to the Son. A difficulty has been felt with regard to this passage (cited, as usual, from the LXX.) on the ground of the original Hebrew being supposed not to bear the meaning assigned to it. Hence the writer of the Epistle is said to have made use of an erroneous rendering for the purpose of his argument. Certainly the *context* of the psalm, in which God is represented as arraying himself in the glories and operating through the powers of nature, suggests no other meaning than that he uses the winds as his messengers, etc., in the same poetical sense in which he was said in the preceding verse to make the clouds his chariot; cf. Ps. cxlviii. 8, "Fire and hail, snow and vapours, stormy wind fulfilling his word." If so, there is no necessary reference in the original psalm to angels. But it is to be observed, on the other hand, that the structure of ver. 4 is not in the Hebrew identical with that of "he maketh the clouds his chariot" in ver. 3, and hence, in itself, suggests some difference of meaning. For (1) a different verb is used; and (2) the order of the accusatives following the verb is reversed; in both which respects the LXX. correctly follows the Hebrew. In

ver. 3 the verb is *ποίησεν* (*δ τῶν* in the LXX.), the primary meaning of which is "to set," "to place," and, when followed by two accusatives as object and predicate, denotes "to constitute or render a person or thing what the predicate expresses." In ver. 4 the verb is *ποιῶν* (*δ πνεύμα* in the LXX.), the primary meaning of which, when used actively, is "to form," "to fabricate." It is used of God making the heaven and the earth (Gen. i. 7, 16; ii. 2, etc.). When elsewhere, as here, it is followed by two accusatives, one of them (which may come either first or second in order) is found to denote the material out of which anything is formed. Thus Exod. xxxviii. 3, "He made all the vessels (of) brass" (cf. Exod. xxx. 25; xxxvi. 14; xxxvii. 15, 23). Hence an obvious meaning of ver. 4, so far as the mere language is concerned, would be, "He maketh [or, 'formeth'] his messengers [or, 'angels'] of winds, and his ministers of a flaming fire." (Winds certainly, not *spirits*, because of the context. But here the Greek *πνεύματα* is, in itself, as ambiguous as the Hebrew *רוּחַ*, and was as probably meant to denote *winds*.) According to this rendering, the meaning of the verse would seem to be that, out of the natural elements of wind and fire, some special agencies are called into being or operation; not simply that winds and fire generally are used for God's purposes. The change of phraseology between vers. 3 and 4 certainly suggests some change in the idea of the psalmist. What, then, are these agencies? What is meant by the "messengers" and "ministers" connected with the elements of wind and fire? The author of the Epistle (and probably the LXX. too, though the words *ἄγγελοι* and *leitourgoi* are, in themselves, as ambiguous as the Hebrew) saw in these words a reference to the angels, who are denoted by the same two words in Ps. ciii. 20, 21, and who are undoubtedly spoken of elsewhere in the Old Testament as operating in the forces of nature (as in the death of the Egyptian firstborn, the pestilence in the time of David, and the destruction of Sennacherib's army), and seem, in some sense, to be identified with the winds themselves in Ps. xviii. 10, "He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind;" and in Ps. xxxv. 5, "Let them be as chaff before the wind; and let the angel of the Lord chase them." We say that the LXX., as well as the author of the Epistle, probably intended to express this meaning. It is, indeed, more than probable; for, ambiguous as may be the words *ἄγγελοι* and *leitourgoi* in themselves, the structure of the Greek sentence (in which "his angels" and "his ministers" are the objects, and "winds" and "flames of

fire" the predicates), seems to necessitate this meaning, which is further probable from what we know of Alexandrian angelology. It may thus well be that, whether or not the LXX. (rendering, as it does, the Hebrew word for word) gives the exact force of the original phrase, it hits its essential meaning, as intimating angelic agency in nature. And the learned Jews of Alexandria, followed as they are by the later rabbis generally, and by the writer of this Epistle, were, to say the least, as likely to understand the Hebrew as any modern scholars. The question, however, is not, after all, of great importance. For let us grant that the writer of the Epistle unwittingly adduced an erroneous rendering in the course of his argument. What then? It is not necessary to suppose that the inspiration of the sacred writers was such as to enlighten them in matters of Hebrew criticism. If it guarded them from erroneous teaching, it was sufficient for its purpose. And in this case the passage, as cited, at any rate expresses well the general doctrine of the Old Testament about angels, viz. that, unlike the Son, they are but subordinate agents of the Divine purposes, and connected especially with the operations of nature. It is to be observed, too, that the quotations generally in this Epistle are adduced, not as exhaustive proofs, but rather as suggestive of the general teaching of the Old Testament, with which the readers are supposed to be familiar.

Vers. 8—13.—Two more quotations from the psalms with reference to the Son adduced in contrast.

Vers. 8, 9.—But unto the Son he saith. The preposition here translated "unto" is *πρὸς*, as in ver. 7, there translated "of." As is evident from its use in ver. 7, it does not imply of necessity that the persons spoken of are addressed in the quotations, though it is so in this second case. The force of the preposition itself need only be "in reference to." The first quotation is from Ps. xlv. 6, 7. The psalm was evidently written originally as an epithalamium on the occasion of the marriage of some king of Israel to some foreign princess. The general and probable opinion is that the king was Solomon. His marriage with Pharaoh's daughter may have been the occasion. The view taken by some (as Hengstenberg), that the psalm had no original reference to an actual marriage, being purely a Messianic prophecy, is inconsistent both with its own contents and with the analogy of other Messianic psalms (see what was said on this head with reference to Ps. ii.). Those who enter into the view of Messianic prophecy that has been given above, will have no difficulty in perceiving the justness of the application of

this psalm to Christ, notwithstanding its primary import. Like Ps. ii., it presents (in parts at least) an ideal picture, suggested only and imperfectly realized by the temporary type; an ideal of which we find the germ in 2 Sam. vii., and the amplification in later prophecy. Further, the title, "For the precentor" ("To the chief musician," A.V.), shows that the psalm was used in the temple services, and thus, whatever might be the occasion of its composition, was understood by the Jews of old as having an ulterior meaning. Further, there is possibly (as Delitzsch points out) a reference to the psalm as Messianic in Isa. lxi. 1—3, where "the Servant of Jehovah," "the Anointed," gives the "oil of gladness" for mourning; and in ix. 5, where the words of the psalm, "God" (ver. 6) and "mighty" (ver. 3) are compounded for a designation of the Messiah; also in Zech. xii. 8, where it is prophesied that in the latter days "the house of David" shall be "as God." The Messianic interpretation is undoubtedly ancient. The Chaldee paraphrast (on ver. 8) writes, "Thy beauty, O King Messiah, is greater than that of the sons of men." Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever. Attempts have been made to evade the conclusion that the king is here addressed as "God," (1) by taking the clause as a parenthetical address to God himself; (2) by regarding "God" as appended to "throne," or as the predicate of the sentence; i.e. translating either "Thy throne-of-God is" etc. (according to the sense of 1 Chron. xxix. 23, "Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king"), or "Thy throne is God [i.e. Divine] for ever and ever." As to (1), the context repudiates it. As to (2), it is a question whether the Hebrew is patient of the supposed construction. At any rate, "God" is understood as a vocative in the LXX. as well as in the Epistle, in which the LXX. is quoted (for the use of the nominative form, *ὁ Θεός*, in a vocative sense, cf. Luke xviii. 11, 13; Matt. xxvii. 29; Mark ix. 25; Luke viii. 54; xii. 32); and in the Chaldee paraphrase, and all ancient versions, it is understood so also. Probably no other interpretation would have been thought of but for the difficulty of supposing an earthly king to be thus addressed. It is to be observed, however, that the other rendering would express essentially the same idea, and be sufficient for the argument. In either case the throne of the Son is represented as God's throne, and eternal. The only difference is that the vocative rendering makes more marked and manifest the ideal view of his subject taken by the psalmist. For it is most unlikely that a bard of the sanctuary, a worshipper of the jealous God of Israel, would have so apostrophized any earthly king except as prefiguring "a greater than

Solomon" to come. It is true that kings are elsewhere called "gods" in the plural (as in Pa. lxxxii. 6, referred to by our Lord, John x. 35); but the solemn addressing of an individual king by this title is (if the vocative rendering be correct) peculiar to this psalm. The passage (1 Sam. xxviii. 13) adduced in abatement of the significance of the title, where the apparition of Samuel is described by the witch of Endor as "Elohim ascending out of the earth," is not a parallel case. The word "Elohim" has a comprehensive meaning, depending on context for its precise significance. If vocatively used in a solemn address to a king sitting upon an everlasting throne, it surely implies the assigning of Divine honours to the king so addressed. In this case still more is implied than in Pa. ii., where the King is spoken of as God's Son, enthroned on Zion, the Son being here addressed as himself "Elohim." It may be that the inspiring Spirit suggested language to the psalmist beyond his own comprehension at the time of utterance (see 1 Pet. i. 10, 11). It may be added that the ultimate Messianic reference of the expression is confirmed by Isa. ix. 6, where the title *El-Gibbor* ("Mighty God," A.V.) distinctly used of God himself in x. 21 (cf. Deut. x. 17; Jer. xxxii. 18; Neh. ix. 32; Pa. xxiv. 8), is applied to the Messiah. A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. In this and the following clause is expressed the important idea that the ideal throne of the Son is founded on *righteousness*, whence comes also his peculiar unctio with "the oil of gladness." Only so far as Solomon or other theocratic kings exemplified the Divine righteousness, did they approach the ideal position assigned to the Son. Cf. the latter part of ver. 14 in the original promise, 2 Sam. vii., and especially 2 Sam. xxiii. 3, etc., in the "last words of David." Observe also the prominence of the idea in Pa. lxxii. and in later prophecy (cf. Isa. ix. 7; xl. 2, etc.). Therefore, God, even thy God. The first "God" here may be again in the vocative, as in the preceding verse, or it may be as the A.V. takes it (cf. Pa. xliii. 4; l. 7). Hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. The primary reference is, not to the king's coronation (as in Pa. lxxxix. 20), but to unction as symbolical of blessing and joy, connected with the custom of anointing the head at feasts (cf. Deut. xxviii. 40; Pa. xliii. 5; xcii. 10; Cant. i. 12; Matt. vi. 17). "Thy fellows," in its original reference, seems most naturally to mean "thy associates in royalty," "other kings;" cf. Pa. lxxxix. 27, "I will make him my Firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth." Or it might mean the companions of the bridegroom, the *παραινέσεις*. The latter reference lends itself readily to the

fulfilment in Christ, the Bridegroom of the Church, whose *παραινέσεις* the redeemed are; themselves also being, after their measure, *χριστοί* (cf. 1 John ii. 20, 27). But they are also made "kings and priests unto God" by Christ (Rev. i. 6; v. 10); so that either of the supposed original references may be shown to be typical, if it be thought necessary to find a definite fulfilment of all the details of the address to the theocratic king. The view that in the fulfilment the angels are to be understood as Christ's *μετόχοι* is inadmissible. There is nothing in the psalm to suggest the thought of them, nor does the way in which they are contrasted with the Son in this chapter admit of their being here spoken of as his *μετόχοι*. Men, in the next chapter, are so spoken of.

Vers. 10—12.—And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning, etc. The bearing of this quotation (from Pa. cii. 25—27) on the argument in hand is not at first sight obvious; since, in the psalm, the address is plainly to God, without any mention of, or apparent reference to, the Son. The psalm is entitled, "A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord." It seems likely, from its contents, to have been written by some suffering saint during the Babylonian captivity: for its purport is a prayer, rising into confident expectation for deliverance from a state of deep affliction, Israel being in captivity and Jerusalem in ruins. The prayed-for and expected deliverance, portrayed in vers. 16—24, corresponds so closely, both in thought and expression, with that pictured in the latter chapters of Isaiah (beginning at ch. xl.), that we cannot hesitate in assigning the same meaning to both. There is, for instance, the looking down of the Lord from heaven to behold the affliction of his people (cf. Isa. lxiii. 15); the setting free of captives (cf. Isa. xlii. 7; lxi. 1); the rebuilding and restoration of Zion, and in connection with this the conversion of the Gentiles to serve the Lord with Israel (cf. Isa. xl.—lxvi.; and especially lix. 19; lx. 2). These are specimens of the general correspondence between the two pictures, which must be evident to all who have studied both. But the ultimate reference of Isaiah's prophecy is certainly Messianic: wherefore that of the psalm may be concluded to be the same. And thus we have made one step in explanation of the applicability of this quotation to the argument of the Epistle in confirming its ultimate reference to the Messiah's advent: to the final realization of the ideal of the Son, typified by theocratic kings. But we have still to account for the apparent application to the Son of what, in the original psalm, shows no sign of being addressed to him. One view

is that there is no intention in the Epistle of quoting it as addressed to him, the phrase, *wp̄s tōv ulōv* (as has been seen) not of necessity implying such intention. According to this view, the point of the quotation is that the Messianic salvation is made to rest solely on the eternity and immutability of God—of him who, as he created all at first, so, though heaven and earth should pass away, remains unchanged. And the character of the salvation, thus regarded, is conceived to carry with it the transcendent super-angelic dignity of its accomplisher, the Son. So, in effect, Ebrard, who dwells on this as one example of the general character of apostolical exegesis, as opposed to rabbinical, in that, instead of drawing inferences, often arbitrary, from isolated words or phrases, the apostolic interpreters draw all their arguments from the *spirit* of the passages considered in their connection, and this with a depth of intuition peculiar to themselves. Other commentators consider it more consistent with both the context and the argument to see, in the Epistle at least, an intended address to the Son. If this be so, our conclusion must be that this application of the psalmist's words is the inspired writer's own; since it is certainly not apparent in the psalm. It by no means follows that the writer of the Epistle foisted, consciously or unconsciously, a false meaning into the psalm. Even apart from the consideration of his being an inspired contributor to the New Testament canon, he was too learned in Scripture, and too able a reasoner, to adduce an evidently untenable argument. He may be understood as himself applying the passage in a way which he does not mean to imply was intended by the psalmist. His drift may be, "You have seen how in Ps. xlv. the Son is addressed as God, and as having an eternal throne. Yea, so Divine is he that the address to the everlasting God himself in another psalm prophetic of his advent may be truly recognized as an address to him." Whichever view we take of this difficult passage, this at any rate is evident—that the inspired writer of the Epistle, apart from the question of the relevancy of quotation in the way of argument, associated Christ in his own mind with the unchangeable Creator of all things.

Ver. 13.—But to which of the angels said he (properly, *hath he said*) at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? A final and crowning quotation is thus adduced, in the form in which the first quotation referring to the Son (ver. 5) had been introduced, to complete the view of his superiority to the angels. The quotation is from Ps. cx., the reference of which to the Messiah is settled beyond controversy to Christian believers, not only by its being

quoted or alluded to more frequently than any other psalm with that reference in the New Testament (Acts ii. 34; vii. 55, 56; Rom. viii. 34; Eph. i. 20—22; 1 Pet. iii. 22; ch. i. 3, 13, 14; viii. 1; x. 12, 13), and by the introduction of its language into the Church's earliest Creeds, but also by the authority of our Lord himself, as recorded by all the three synoptical evangelists (Matt. xxii. 41; Mark xii. 35; Luke xx. 41). Hence readers of this Commentary will not require a confutation of the arguments of any modern rationalistic critics who have disputed the Messianic meaning of the psalm. Their arguments rest really on their *a priori* denial of a "spirit of prophecy" in the psalms generally; in their refusal to recognize, what the later prophets recognized, an unfulfilled ideal in what the psalmists wrote of theocratic kings. Let us once recognize this, and we shall perceive in this psalm peculiar marks of the spirit of prophecy, reaching beyond any contemporary fulfilment, not only in the assignment to the King of a seat at the right hand of the heavenly throne, but also in his remarkable designation as a "Priest after the order of Melchizedek," of which more will be said under ch. v. and vii. of this Epistle. It is to be observed also how prophets, long after the psalm was written, regarded its ideal as still awaiting fulfilment; e.g. Daniel (vii. 13, etc.), whose vision of the Son of man brought near before the Ancient of days, and having an everlasting dominion given him, is referred to by our Lord (Matt. xxvi. 64) in connection with the psalm, as awaiting fulfilment in himself; and Zechariah (vi. 12, etc.), who takes up the idea of the psalm in speaking of the Branch, who was to unite in himself royalty and priesthood. The psalm is entitled, "A psalm of David." Though this title is prefixed to some psalms the contents of which suggest a later date, and is not, therefore, considered proof of authorship, it proves at least the tradition and belief of the Jews when the Hebrew Psalter was arranged in its existing form. But we have in this case evidence in the three Gospels of its universal acceptance as a psalm of David by the Jews in the time of our Lord; and, what is of more weight, of his having himself referred to it as such. The whole point of his argument with the Pharisees depends on the acknowledgment of David being the speaker, as well as of the Messiah being the Person spoken of. None of the Pharisees thought of disputing either of these premises; they were evidently received as indisputable; nor can it be conceived (as has been irreverently suggested) that our Lord did not thus give his own sanction to their truth. Nor, further, is there in the psalm itself any

internal evidence against its Davidic authorship, though, but for the above testimony to the contrary, it *might* have been the composition of a prophet of David's day, or written by David for use by his people—the term, “my lord,” having thus a primary reference to him. In either of these cases we might suppose the original conception of ver. 1 to have been that of David himself being enthroned on Zion at the side of the “King of glory” (Ps. xxiv.) who had “come in;” while ver. 4 might *possibly* have been suggested by David's organization of the services of the tabernacle, and by the personal part he took in the ritual when the ark was removed to Zion. Even so, the quotation would answer the purpose of the argument according to the view of the drift of Messianic psalms which has been explained above. But, even independently of the distinct import of our Lord's words, there are reasons (pointed out by Delitzsch) against the supposition of even a primary reference to David in the words, “my lord.” Two may be mentioned: (1) that the assignment of sacerdotal functions to an earthly king is contrary to the whole spirit of the Old Testament; (2) that God's own throne is elsewhere represented as, not in Zion, but above the heavens. Now, the conclusion thus arrived at, that David himself is speaking throughout the psalm of another than himself, gives a peculiar force to this final quotation, in that the Antitype is distinguished from and raised above the type more evidently than in other Messianic psalms. In others (as we have regarded them) the typical king himself is the primary object in view, though ideally glorified so as to foreshadow One greater than himself; here the typical king seems to have a distinct vision of the Messiah apart from himself, and speaks of him as his lord. It does not follow that David's own position and circumstances did not form a basis for his vision. We perceive traces of them in

“the rod of thy strength out of Zion,” and in the picture which follows of the submission of heathen kings after warfare and slaughter. But vers. 1 and 4 point still to another than himself whom he foresees in the spirit of prophecy. The psalm begins, literally translated, “The voice [or, ‘oracle,’ Hebrew עֹרֵךְ] of Jehorah to my lord, Sit thou on my right hand,” etc. This sounds like more than a mere echo of Nathan's message, the language being different and still more significant. And that such a vision of a future fulfilment of the promise was not foreign to the mind of David appears from his “last words” (2 Sam. xxiii. 1, etc.), where also the significant word עֹרֵךְ is used. And now, mark what the language of this “oracle” implies—not merely the enthronement of the Son on Zion as God's Vicegerent, but his session at the right hand of God himself, i.e. “at the right hand of the Majesty on high;” God's own throne being ever (as has been said above) regarded as above the heavens, or, if on earth, above the cherubim. Such, then, being the meaning of the “oracle” (and it is the meaning uniformly given it in the New Testament), well may it be adduced as the final and crowning proof of the position above the angels assigned to the Son in prophecy.

Ver. 14.—Are they not all, etc.? A final expression, adduced in contrast, of the position and office of the angels, as seen above. The A.V. suggests the idea, not conveyed by the Greek, of *guardian* angels. The more correct translation is, *Are they not all ministering (ἀκροατοὶ) spirits, for service (εἰς διακονίαν) sent forth, on account of those who are to (διὰ τοὺς μέλλοντας) inherit salvation?* The allusion is generally to their office of subordinate ministration in furtherance of the Divine purposes of human salvation; the continuance of such office being denoted by the present participle, ἀκροα-λόμενοι.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The two revelations.* In this sublime exordium, which strikes the keynote of his doctrinal teaching, the writer takes for granted: 1. The *inspiration* of the Scriptures. “God hath spoken.” How awful this truth, yet how blessed! With what a clear ringing note of certainty the author assumes it! The Scriptures put forth no theory of inspiration, but they everywhere claim to declare the mind and will of God. 2. The *interdependence* of the two revelations. It is the same God who has “spoken” in both. The new does not ignore or contradict the old; it rests upon it, develops it, and completes it. The Old Testament, no less than the New, will bear every trial to which it may be subjected by either the lower or the higher criticism.

I. THE OLD TESTAMENT REVELATION CHARACTERIZED. It is: 1. *Ancient*. “Of old time unto the fathers.” “Since the world began” (Acts iii. 21). For nearly four hundred years now God had ceased speaking; it was more than fifteen hundred since the first part of the Old Testament had been written; and it was over

four thousand years at the very least since God had begun to speak. 2. *Given "in the prophets."* A prophet is a forth-speaker—a spokesman—one who speaks for another. The prophetic formula was, "Thus saith Jehovah." God's prophets were men; he conveyed his message to his people through human minds and hearts. No prophet wrote as an automaton; his own faculties wrought, and his ink-horn was dashed with his heart's blood. It is very beautiful to see the prophets rising up, one after another, in these far-past days. Together they form a "goodly fellowship;" each was the noblest spirit of his time. 3. *Fragmentary.* "By divers portions." God had given the former revelation part by part. He delivered it in connection with temporary dispensations—the Adamic, the Abrahamic, and the Mosaic. He gave it first by oral communication, and latterly by Scripture. The Old Testament grew slowly; it took more than a millennium to complete it, and at least twenty-seven different writers contributed to it. The revelation, though of priceless value, was always fragmentary and imperfect; it was meant to be progressive and preparatory. God gave one truth to one age, and another to a succeeding age. The promises of redemption became the longer the more definite. 4. *Multiform.* "In divers manners"—in manifold fashion. Now God spoke by dreams, now by visions, now by voices, now by angels, now by similitudes, now by Urim, now by sacrifices and lustrations, now by putting a burning word into the prophet's soul. How various too, is the literature of the Old Testament Scriptures! Now it is historical, now biographical, now legislative, now prophetic, now philosophic, now poetical; as varied as the fresh mind of every contributor, and yet revealing all through the one eternal Mind.

II. THE NEW TESTAMENT REVELATION CONTRASTED WITH THE OLD. The writer merely suggests this contrast, leaving its details to be wrought out in the meditation of his readers. Unlike the Old, the New Testament revelation is: 1. *Recent and final.* "At the end of these days unto us." This refers to the close of the Mosaic economy. Judaism, like the older dispensations which preceded it, had got worn out, and in its turn had passed away; but the Christian dispensation is the final one, to be consummated only at the second advent. So, the new economy shall be ever present and always new, because not to be superseded so long as the world lasts. 2. *Given "in his Son."* What an element of stupendous contrast! The prophets were only inspired men; this is a Divine Person. The prophets were only servants; this is the Son. The prophets were only God's spokesmen; this is God himself speaking. The Son is the Logos—the "Word," the manifested God. What a view is presented in the following clauses of his Divine dignity and his mediatorial majesty! This first grand sentence of the Epistle reminds us of the scene on the holy mount. It points us away from Moses and Elijah, as did the voice from the excellent glory, saying to our souls, "This is my beloved Son: hear ye him." 3. *Complete and perfect.* The New Testament presents the truth, not fragmentarily, as the Old Testament did, but in finished form and in undivided fullness. It was entirely written by eight or nine men belonging to one generation. It contains a richer revelation of more developed truth than that which is found in the Hebrew Scriptures. In the Son of God, speaking to us through his apostles and evangelists, we see revelation full-orbed at last. For eighteen centuries now the canon has been complete; and, thus, progress in theology can be made only as the result of better understanding of what God has already given us. The laureate's "Ring in the Christ that is to be," cannot refer with propriety to any Christ that is unrevealed. 4. *Simple and clear.* The Old Testament revelation was multiform—like a painted window, covered over with many-coloured and beautiful emblems; that of the New Testament is like a window of pure clear glass, through which we gaze upon the unveiled glory of heaven. The water of life trickled through the Old Testament in a variety of tiny streamlets; it runs in the New Testament with the flow of a broad pellucid river. Christ and his apostles "use great plainness of speech." The New Testament is much shorter than the Old, but it is more inward, evangelical, and spiritual. It is a better revelation as well as a later one; for it contains the substance rather than the shadows—the heavenly things rather than only their patterns. Preaching is a very simple ordinance. The two sacraments constitute the entire Christian ritual. The Old Testament "veil is done away in Christ."

In conclusion: 1. Great as were the privileges of the ancient Hebrews (Rom. ix.

4, 5), how much higher are ours (Matt. xiii. 16, 17)! 2. How much heavier, accordingly, are our responsibilities (Heb. xii. 25)! What base ingratitude in any one not to listen to the Son of God, and to refuse to shape his life in accordance with the complete and glorious circle of Christian truth!

Vers. 2—4.—The glory of the God-Man. So soon as the apostle mentions the "Son," there spreads out before his mind a vast expanse of the territory of revelation—the loftiest shining table-land of truth which the Scriptures open to our gaze. Indeed, this sentence supplies a sublime basis for all true Christology. It describes at once the Redeemer's essential glory as the pre-existent One, and his mediatorial glory as the incarnate Messiah.

I. THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN RELATION TO GOD. The clauses which speak of this solemnize us by their mystery, and dazzle us by their splendour. 1. *He is the Son of God.* (Ver. 2.) "Son" is not merely an official title; it designates the natural and eternal relation of the Second Person of the Godhead to the First. Christ is God's "only-begotten Son"—his Son in a sense absolutely unique, as implying sameness of essence with the Father. 2. *He is the Manifestation of God.* (Ver. 3.) "The effulgence of his glory;"—i.e. Christ is an eternal radiation of splendour from the majesty of the absolute Jehovah. He is "Light of [from] light." The rays which stream from the sun reveal the sun itself; so Christ is the ever-visible radiance of the unapproachable Light. We have but to look to him who is "the Word" for a display of the attributes and perfections of Deity. 3. *He is the Counterpart of God.* (Ver. 3.) "The very image of his substance," i.e. the adequate imprint of his substantial essence. The Shechinah in the tabernacle had not the personal form of God; but the Son bears his real and perfect likeness. Christ has upon himself the exact impress of Deity. He is the Father's *alter ego*—his very image. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." So perfectly does the Son bear the impress of God, that he could say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

II. THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN RELATION TO THE UNIVERSE. What is said on this point proves his Deity, the very same acts and prerogatives being elsewhere ascribed to God. 1. *He is its Creator.* (Ver. 2.) The life of the God-Man did not begin only nineteen centuries ago. He is himself "the Beginning"—the Alpha—the Firstborn before every creature (Col. i. 15—18). He made the natural universe—every star that adorns the arch of night. He ordained all periods and dispensations ("ages")—all geological formations, all historical eras, all economies of religion. 2. *He is its Sustainer.* (Ver. 3.) It is his fiat that holds the universe together. "In him all things consist." On his fingers hang the suns and systems of immensity. It is the Lord Christ who adjusts and governs all the tremendous forces—physical, intellectual, and spiritual—which operate throughout creation. The pulses of universal life are regulated by the throbbing of his mighty heart. He is the Soul of providence, and the Centre of history. 3. *He is its Possessor.* "Whom he appointed Heir of all things." (Ver. 2.) As the Son of God, Christ received this appointment and gift in the past eternity. As the God-Man, his Father has constituted him, by another deed of gift, the mediatorial Monarch of the universe. The keys of death and of Hades hang at his girdle. He is the Lord of angels. He has "authority over all flesh." His own people are his peculiar inheritance,—the very jewels of his crown.

III. THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN RELATION TO THE CHURCH. The Lord's mediatorial honours have cast a new lustre over even his original renown. 1. *He is its Prophet.* (Ver. 2.) It is as the Teacher of the Church that the writer introduces his name in this magnificent prologue. The eternal "Logos"—the manifestation and counterpart of God—has become "the light of the world." When on earth he taught his followers by personal instruction; and now that he is in heaven, he enlightens the Church by his Word and by the influences of his Spirit. 2. *He is its Priest.* (Ver. 3.) Jesus is more than a teacher, and his gospel is more than simply a philosophy. Mankind, being sinners, have not liberty of access to God; we need some one to approach God on our behalf. We require a priest, and an altar with a sacrifice on it, in order to the "purification of sins." Now, Christ is our Priest. He made "purification" eighteen centuries ago by his life in Palestine and his death on Calvary. He accomplished a work of expiation—an objective atonement. And the efficacy of his

sacrifice is chiefly due to the infinite dignity of his person as "the effulgence of God's glory, and the very image of his substance." 3. *He is its King.* (Ver. 3.) This royalty is the reward of his work of "purification." Having made perfect satisfaction for human sin, he ascended on high and sat down upon the throne of sovereign authority. From the right hand of the Father, as the place of super-eminent dignity and power, he rules his people by the might of his cross. The "Heir of all things" is fully qualified to be the Head of the Church, and Head over all for the advantage of the Church. The loftiest seraph is immeasurably his inferior. Jesus has been raised as high above Michael and Gabriel as he was eternally above them, and as he therefore inherited a more illustrious name than they (ver. 4).

In conclusion, why does the apostle expatiate thus upon the greatness and glory of the Prophet of the New Testament? Not merely because he delights to do so; but rather, also, to attract our hearts to the love and worship and service of the Lord Jesus, whose creatures we are, and to whom we belong by the purchase of his blessed blood.

Vers. 4—14.—*Christ greater than the angels.* The Jews used to boast that their Law had been given at Sinai by the instrumentality of angels; and they concluded from this that the Mosaic dispensation would continue as long as the world itself. But the apostle asserts here that the Lord Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, is immeasurably greater than the angels; and he supports his assertion with abundant evidence from the Hebrew Scriptures. Ver. 4 supplies us with the key to this whole passage. The quotations which follow illustrate from the Old Testament the two statements of that verse, while they also justify the glorious titles and prerogatives directly ascribed to the Redeemer in vers. 2 and 3.

I. CHRIST HAS HAD FROM ETERNITY AN ESSENTIAL NATURE HIGHER THAN THE ANGELS. "He hath inherited a more excellent name than they." Names in modern times are generally quite inexpressive—mere labels affixed to individuals to distinguish them from others; but among the Jews it was otherwise. The names of God, especially, symbolized attributes of his character. So, Christ's "Name" expresses his nature. 1. *He is God's Son.* (Ver. 5.) In Pa. ii. we hear his own voice rehearsing from his Father's counsel the decree of his eternal sonship. That decree dates from everlasting; but it was to be "declared" again and again, and particularly by the event of his resurrection (Rom. i. 4). Even Nathan the prophet had proclaimed it to David (2 Sam. vii. 14) in his prophecy respecting Solomon and "a greater than Solomon." 2. *He is Elohím.* (Vers. 8, 9.) The two highest Old Testament names of God are *Elohím* and *Jehováh*: none are more distinctive of Deity than these. So Pa. xlv. 6 is one of the great proof-texts for the supreme divinity of Christ. There the psalmist addresses the coming mediatorial King as God himself, by-and-by to be clothed in human nature. He was to fulfil all righteousness for man, and to be invested as the God-Man with the sceptre of supreme authority above all his brethren of mankind. 3. *He is Jehorah.* (Vers. 10—12.) The idea conveyed by this Divine name is that of self-existence. Now, the apostle does not hesitate here to apply to Christ the language of Pa. cii.—a Jehovistic psalm—in celebration of the eternity and majesty of the Eternal. The Covenant-Deliverer of captive Zion is none other than Jehováh Jesus. It was he who created the universe; and he shall remain unchanged—the everlasting Stay and Strength of his children—after the heavens shall be no more. For he is the I AM. Immutability is one of his glories. Contrast now with this the name and nature of the angels. God nowhere addresses any one of them as his "Son." No angel is called *Jehováh*. None receives the name *Elohím* in the way in which this appellation is given to Christ. Instead of that, the angels are created beings (ver. 7). They are servants of God, who in their qualities and uses resemble the winds and the lightning. The cherubim fly swiftly like the "winds;" the seraphim burn with holy ardour like a "flame of fire." The Son of God is not the peer of the angels: he is Jehováh Elohím; and the loftiest spirits in the heavenly hierarchy are his creatures.

II. CHRIST HAS BEEN RAISED IN TIME TO A PROPORTIONATELY HIGHER OFFICIAL POSITION. "Having become by so much better than the angels." He became superior

to the angels in his official capacity as the God-Man Mediator—as much superior as he had been from the beginning in his essential nature. His mediatorial pre-eminence began clearly to appear nineteen hundred years ago, in connection both with his humiliation and his exaltation. 1. *When on earth, Jesus received angelic worship.* (Ver. 6.) This had been predicted in Ps. xovii. And, accordingly, when Christ became incarnate, angels thronged round his manger-cradle, proclaiming his advent, and celebrating it in a burst of choral praise. Angels ministered to him after the temptation, and sustained him under his great agony. Angels attended at his resurrection, and haunted for a time his empty tomb. Angels encompassed him in his final ascension to glory. 2. *Now, in heaven, he sits on God's right hand.* (Ver. 13.) His official exaltation had been predicted in Ps. cx. God never said, "Sit thou on my right hand" to any angel, i.e. to any creature. Therefore the illustrious Priest-King of that psalm is not a creature; and, if not a creature, he must be the Creator. The session of the Mediator at the right hand of Jehovah implies that the entire universe is subject to his sceptre. He employs the holy angels, and he controls and restrains the "spiritual hosts of wickedness." Contrast now with this the official position of the angels (ver. 14). (1) They are "ministering spirits" to the Mediator of the new covenant. They stand before the throne upon which he sits—waiting his commands, and eager to do his pleasure. (2) He employs their service on behalf of those "that shall inherit salvation." The angels encamp round about believers; they watch over little children; they are instruments of good to the poor and the forsaken; they carry away the spirits of the departed into Abraham's bosom; they will gather the saints at the final judgment.

Learn in conclusion: 1. *The plenary inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures.* The author quotes what Nathan and David and the other psalmists said, as being the words of God himself. He is evidently fully persuaded that the Old Testament writers express with superhuman insight the very mind of God regarding his incarnate Son. 2. *The reality of the angel world and of angel help.* It seems to be always difficult for the Church to hold, in its scriptural purity, the doctrine of the angels. On this subject may be noticed the rationalistic error, the Gnostic error, the Romish error, and the Protestant error. Many Protestants give no place in their living faith to the truth about the angels. 3. *The necessity of living for the glory of our Divine Redeemer.* An intellectual persuasion of his true Godhead is not enough; we must take home the sublime Christology of this chapter to our hearts, and allow it, by its power reigning within us, to mould and guide our entire lives.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*God's revelation of redemptive truth to man.* "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners," etc. God has spoken to man. A very significant fact. It suggests the Divine interest in his human creatures. It teaches that man is capable of receiving communications from the infinite Mind. He can understand, appreciate, and appropriate to his unspeakable advantage the thoughts of God concerning him. He is under obligations to do so. Man's attitude towards the communications of God should be that of devout attention and earnest investigation. Our text teaches that *God's revelation of redemptive truth to man*—

I. *WAS MADE THROUGH MAN.* "God . . . spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets;" Revised Version, "in the prophets." The prophets were not simply predictors of future events; the word is applied to the sacred lawgiver, historians, poets, etc. God spake in them and through them to the fathers. "It was the very condition of the prophet's inspiration," says Robertson, "that he should be one with the people. So far from making him superhuman, it made him *more* man. He felt with more exquisite sensitiveness all that belongs to man, else he could not have been a prophet. His insight into things was the result of that very weakness, sensitiveness, and susceptibility so tremblingly alive. He burned with their thoughts, and expressed them. He was obliged by the very sensitiveness of his humanity to have a more entire dependence and a more perfect sympathy than other men. . . . He was more man, just because more Divine—more a Son of man, because more a Son of God."

II. WAS MADE GRADUALLY. "At sundry times;" Revised Version, "by divers portions." The revelation was given piecemeal, by fragments, in and by various persons, and in different ages. Very gradual was the revelation of redemptive truth to man. God's first communication (Gen. iii. 15) was like the evening star, serene and solitary; the fuller communications of the patriarchal age were like the starry hosts of night; the revelations made to Moses were like the light of the fair and full-orbed moon, in which that of the stars is lost; and those made by succeeding prophets were like the dawn of the day, when the moon grows pale and dim; and the supreme revelation was like the radiance of the sun shining in noontide splendour. This gradualness of revelation may be seen in many things, e.g.: 1. The character of God. Very gradual was the unfolding of the nature and character of the Divine Being to man. The measure of the revelation was adapted to the measure of the human capacity. Jesus, the Son, revealed the essence and heart of the Father. "God is a Spirit." Parable of the prodigal son. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." 2. The salvation of man and its method. 3. True human character and blessedness (cf. Deut. xxviii. 1—14 with Matt. v. 1—12). 4. The immortality of man. We find in the Bible longings for immortality, inquiries after it, hints concerning it, anticipations of it, but not until the final revelation in Christ was it brought into clear and assured light (2 Tim. i. 10). This gradualness of the Divine unfoldment should be remembered by us as we study the Divine communications. Let us not expect to find in the earlier portions what the later alone can contain, or put to Moses inquiries which only the Son can reply to.

III. WAS MADE VARIOUSLY. "In divers manners." This is true: 1. *Of God's communications to the prophets.* He communicated with them by Urim and Thummim, by dreams, visions, ecstasies, by quickening and directing their thoughts, etc. God is not limited as to his modes of access to and influence over the minds of men. He can call them into active exercise, impress them with deep convictions, etc. 2. *Of the communications of the prophets to men.* They spoke in prose and poetry, in parable and proverb, in history and prediction, in forcible reasoning and glowing eloquence. Each prophet also has his own style. God's revelations in the Bible and in nature are alike in this, that they are characterized by endless and delightful variety. In nature we have the majestic mountain and the lowly valley, the massive oak and the modest daisy, the serene stars and the storm-driven clouds, the booming ocean and the rippling rivulet. Equally great and beautiful is the variety in the sacred Scriptures.

IV. IS CHARACTERIZED BY UNITY. The revelation was given "by divers portions and in divers manners;" it came through different men and in widely distant ages; yet all the portions are in substantial agreement. The voices are many and various, but they meet and combine in one sweet and sublime harmony. In the different portions of the revelation we discover unity of *character*—every portion is spiritual, pure, sacred; unity of *direction*—every portion points to the last great revelation, the Divine Son; unity of *purpose*—to make man "wise unto salvation." We conclude, then, that while the speakers were many, the inspiring Mind was One only. Or, keeping more closely to the phraseology of the text, though the voices were many, the Speaker was but one. In this marvellous unity in such great diversity, we have the basis of a cogent argument for the Divine origin of the sacred Scriptures.

V. IS PERFECTED IN HIS SON. "God . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son;" Revised Version, "hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son." The revelations made in and by the prophets were imperfect. "They were various in nature and form, fragments of the whole truth, presented in manifold forms, in shifting lines of separated colour. Christ is the full revelation of God, himself the pure Light, uniting in his one Person the whole spectrum" (Alford). It is quite appropriate that the perfect revelation should be made in and through the Divine Son. The Son will be perfectly acquainted with the Father, and therefore able to declare his will. The Son will resemble the Father, and therefore be able to manifest him. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son," etc. No one knoweth "the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him;" "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." The Divine revelations of redemptive truth to man culminate in him. No new or further revelations will be granted unto us; but to the devout, patient, and earnest student, new and brighter light will stream forth

from the revelations already given. Many of the utterances of the Son are as yet only very partially and imperfectly understood even by his most advanced pupils. His words are of inexhaustible significance; and that significance will become increasingly manifest to the prayerful and patient inquirer.

CONCLUSION. Let us rejoice that we have this latest and brightest revelation of God, this clearest utterance of his will concerning us and our salvation. Let us heartily accept this revelation. It is truly accepted only when it is acted upon; i.e. when we have received the Son of God as our Saviour and Lord.—W. J.

Vers. 2, 3.—*The transcendent glory of the Son of God.* "His Son, whom he hath appointed Heir of all things," etc. The Divine Son, the last and brightest revelation of God to man, is here set before us as supremely glorious in several respects.

I. IN THE VASTNESS OF HIS POSSESSIONS. "Whom he appointed heir of all things." Because he is the Son of God he is constituted Heir of all things. The whole universe is his. "He is Lord of all." "All things that the Father hath are mine;" "All mine are thine, and thine are mine." His lordship is universal. His possessions are unlimited. His wealth is infinite. What an encouragement we have in this to trust in him! "The unsearchable riches of Christ" are available for the supply of all who follow him.

II. IN THE GREATNESS OF HIS WORKS. 1. *He is the Creator of all things.* "By whom also he made the worlds." The innumerable worlds in the universe of God were made by the Divine Son as the "acting Power and personal Instrument" of the Father. Alford: "The universe, as well in its great primal conditions—the reaches of space and the ages of time, as in all material objects and all successive events, which furnish out and people space and time, God made by Christ." He "laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of his hands." "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that hath been made;" "In him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth," etc. (Col. i. 16). All creatures in all worlds were created by him. Creation is a revelation of his mind and might. The glory of creation, rightly understood, is the glory of the Creator—the Son of God. 2. *He is the Sustainer of all things.* "And upholding all things by the word of his power." The universe which he created is upheld and preserved in being by the expression of his almighty power. "In him all things consist;" they are held together by him. The universe is neither self-sustaining nor is it forsaken by God. It is not a great piece of mechanism constructed by the Creator, and then left to work of itself, or to be worked by others. His almighty energy is always and everywhere present in it. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." How stupendous the conception that the boundless universe, with its countless worlds and much more countless inhabitants, is constantly sustained in existence and in beautiful order by the word which utters his power! 3. *He is the Saviour from sin.* "He by himself purged our sins;" Revised Version, "He made purification of sins." This does not mean purification by the moral influence of his teaching and example. There is a reference to the purifications of the Levitical law, by which ceremonial uncleanness was typically removed. "According to the Law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission. . . . He put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." "In the atonement," says Ebrard, "in the gracious covering of the guilt of sin, consists *purification* in the scriptural sense. So that an Israelitish reader, a Christian Jew, would never, on reading the words *καθάρσις ἡμῶν*, think on what we commonly call 'moral amelioration,' which, if not springing out of the living ground of a heart reconciled to God, is mere self-deceit, and only external avoidance of evident transgression; but the *καθάρσις* which Christ brought in would, in the sense of our author and his readers, only be understood of that gracious atonement for all guilt of sin of all mankind, which Christ our Lord and Saviour has completed for us by his sinless sufferings and death; and out of which flows forth to us, as from a fountain, all power to love in return, all love to him, our heavenly Pattern, and all hatred of sin which caused his death." This atonement is *completed*. It admits of no repetition; and nothing can be added unto it. "When he had made purification of sins." The purification is finished, and it is perfect. Thus we see that in his works, as Creator, Sustainer, and Saviour, our Lord is supremely glorious.

III. IN THE DIVINITY OF HIS BEING. "Who being the Brightness of his glory, and the express Image of his person;" Revised Version, "the effulgence of his glory, and the very Image of his substance." These words suggest: 1. *That the Son is of one essence with the Father.* Canon Liddon: "That he is one with God as having streamed forth eternally from the Father's essence, like a ray of light from the parent fire with which it is unbrokenly joined, is implied in the expression *ἀνάγκη τῆς ὁμοιότητος*." Let us not think of this glory as a material thing. It is moral and spiritual. Moses prayed, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee," etc. (Exod. xxxiii. 18-23). Beyond this, perhaps, it becomes us not to speak of the glory of the Divine essence; it is mysterious, ineffable. Jehovah said to Moses, "While my glory passeth by, I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by," etc. (cf. 1 Tim. vi. 16). 2. *That the Son is the perfect revelation of the Father.* He is "the very Image of his substance," or essential being. The word *χαρακτῆρ* signifies the impression produced by a stamp, a seal, or a die. As the impression on the wax corresponds with the engraving on the seal, so the Divine Son is the perfect likeness of the essence of the Father. Hence he said, "He that beholdeth me beholdeth him that sent me." "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." And St. Paul, "He is the Image of the invisible God." 3. *That the Son is personally distinct from the Father.* As the impression on the wax is quite distinct from the seal by which it was made, so the figure suggests that our Lord is "personally distinct from him of whose essence he is the adequate imprint."

IV. IN THE EXALTATION OF HIS POSITION. "Sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." 1. *Here is a glorious position.* "At the right hand of the Majesty on high." This is spoken of his exaltation as the Messiah and in his human nature, after the completion of his work upon earth and his ascension into heaven. "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross," etc. (ch. xii. 2). "Being in the form of God, he counted it not a prize to be of an equality with God," etc. (Phil. ii. 6-11). 2. *Here is the highest realm.* "On high;" i.e. in heaven. "Christ entered . . . into heaven itself" (ch. ix. 24). "Heaven, in Holy Scripture, signifies . . . usually, that sphere of the created world of space and time, where the union of God with the personal creature is not severed by sin, where no death reigns, where the glorification of the body is not a mere hope of the future" (Ebrard). Into that sphere our Lord in his crucified but now risen and glorified humanity has entered, and is enthroned "on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him" (1 Pet. iii. 22). 3. *Here is a waiting attitude.* "Sat down." "Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." He is waiting for all things to be subjected unto him, "in the majestic certainty of his triumph over all who shall oppose the advance of his kingdom."

CONCLUSION. 1. *In him who "made purification of sins" let us trust as our Saviour.* 2. *Unto him who is essentially Divine let us render the full homage of our heart and life.*—W. J.

Vers. 4, 5.—*The exaltation of the Son of God above the angels of God.* "Being made so much better than the angels," etc. The angels of God are great and exalted beings. Our Lord spake of them as "holy angels" (Matt. xxv. 81). David said they "excel in strength" (Ps. ciii. 20). St. Paul designates them "his mighty angels" (2 Thesa. i. 7). Deeds involving stupendous power are ascribed to them (Isa. xxxvii. 36; Acts xii. 7-11). They are said to be "full of eyes," to indicate their great intelligence (Rev. iv. 6, 8). They are represented as occupying a most exalted position and offering the highest worship (Isa. vi. 1-3). In their ranks the highest order of created beings is to be found (Eph. i. 21; Col. i. 16). But our Lord is greater than the angels.

I. IN THE PRE-EMINENCE OF HIS NAME. "He hath inherited a more excellent name than they." 1. *The pre-eminent name—the Son of God.* This appears from ver. 5, "For unto which of the angels," etc.? The first quotation is from Ps. ii., which is generally regarded as Messianic. The second is from 2 Sam. vii. 14, which is applicable primarily to Solomon, but principally to him who is both "the Root and the Offspring of David." Angels are called "sons of God" in the sacred Scriptures (Job i. 6; ii. 1; xxxviii. 7); so also are true Christians (John i. 12; 1 John iii. 1, 2). But to

One only is given the title *the Son of God*, even to "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father," and of whom the Father speaks as "my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It is probable that in this name there is a depth of significance, a height of dignity, and a fulness of glory of which at present we have little or no conception. 2. *The acquisition of this name.* "He hath by inheritance obtained" it. "He hath inherited" it: (1) Because of his relation to the Father. It belongs to him by his very Being, "by virtue of his Divine filiation. Angels may be, in an inferior sense, the sons of God by creation; but they cannot inherit that title, for this plain reason, that they are created, not begotten; whilst our Lord inherits the 'more excellent name,' because he is begotten, not created." (2) And, perhaps, because it was promised to him in the Old Testament Scriptures; as in the passages quoted in our text.

II. IN THE CORRESPONDING PRE-EMINENCE OF HIS NATURE. Names and titles in the sacred writings, generally speaking, are neither given for their euphony, nor are they merely complimentary, but they express realities in the circumstances, or character, or calling of the person to whom they are applied. This is especially the case in respect to the Son of God. "The dignity of his titles is indicative of his essential rank." He is called the Son of God because he is the Son of God in a peculiar and exclusive sense. The name is indicative of his nature, which is essentially Divine.

III. IN HIS CORRESPONDING PRE-EMINENCE AS MEDIATOR. "Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath," etc.; Revised Version, "Having become by so much better than the angels," etc. The "having become" refers to the exaltation of our Lord in his humanity. In like manner it seems to us that the "This day have I begotten thee" refers to his resurrection from the dead. St. Paul certainly applied the words thus (Acts xiii. 32, 33). And he writes, God's "Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection of the dead, even Jesus Christ our Lord." And St. John speaks of "Jesus Christ, the First-begotten of the dead" (Rev. i. 5). We conclude, then, that "begotten" is used figuratively, and that by it is intended the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, by which he was declared to be the Son of God with power, and his exaltation to his mediatorial throne. And this brings us to our present point, which the fourth verse teaches us, that the exaltation of our Lord consequent upon the completion of his redemptive work upon earth is commensurate with the exaltation of his essential nature; or, that his glory as Mediator corresponds with the dignity of his name and nature. Alford: "Observe, that the *ἀπερὶτον γέννημα* is not identical with the *καὶ ἀληθινὸν ἄνθρωπον*, but in proportion to it: the triumphant issue of his mediation is consonant to the glorious name which is his by inheritance; but which, in the fulness of its present inconceivable glory, has been put on and taken up by him in the historical process of his mediatorial humiliation and triumph." The redemption of humanity was an undertaking beyond all human power, and transcending even angelic wisdom, love, and might. Its accomplishment demanded the resources of Godhead. Our Lord has redeemed man in a manner worthy of himself as Son of God, and his exaltation as Redeemer corresponds with the pre-eminence of his transcendent Name. And more, this "exaltation must be conceived of as belonging, not to his humanity only, but to the entire undivided person of Christ, now resuming the fulness and glory of the Godhead (John xvii. 5), and in addition to this having taken into the Godhead the manhood, now glorified by his obedience, atonement, and victory (see Eph. i. 20—22; Phil. ii. 6—9; Acts ii. 36; 1 Pet. iii. 21, 22). The Son of God before his incarnation was Head over creation; but after his work in the flesh he had become also Head of creation, inasmuch as his glorified body, in which he triumphs sitting at God's right hand, is itself created, and is the sum and the centre of creation" (Alford).

CONCLUSION. 1. *Let his pre-eminence as Mediator inspire us with confidence in him as our Saviour.* 2. *Let his essential pre-eminence inspire us with adoring reverence towards him.*—W. J.

Ver. 6.—*The Son of God the Recipient of the worship of the angels.* "And again, when he bringeth in the First-begotten," etc. This verse, as Ebrard remarks, "is unquestionably one of the most difficult in the whole Epistle." We have in it: 1. *An august relationship.* "His First-begotten." This title is appropriately applied to the

Son of God: (1) Because he existed before all creatures. "He is the Firstborn of all creation" (Col. i. 15); "In the beginning was the Word." (2) Because it was given to him in prophecy. "I will make him my Firstborn," etc. (Ps. lxxxix. 27). (3) Because of his miraculous conception (see Matt. i. 18—25; Luke i. 30—35). (4) Because of his resurrection from the dead.¹ "He is the Firstborn from the dead" (Col. i. 18; Rev. i. 5). And it may well be that in this place all these applications of the title are combined in setting forth the unique and august relation of the Divine Son to the God and Father. 2. *A remarkable epoch.* "And again, when he bringeth in the First-begotten into the world." There is much diversity of opinion as to what event in the history of the Son of God is referred to here. Some take it as denoting the resurrection of our Lord. Others, his second coming; as Alford, who translates, "But when he again hath introduced the First-begotten into the world." And others, his incarnation. "It cannot be 'a second bringing in of the Firstborn into the world' that is here spoken of," says Ebrard, "seeing that nothing has been said of a first." This seems to us the correct interpretation. It is very significant that the heavenly intelligences should be summoned to worship him "even when he was entering upon his profound self-humiliation." The angel Gabriel foretold his birth (Luke i. 26), the angel of the Lord announced it, and a multitude of the heavenly host celebrated it in joyful worship-song (ll. 9—14). This introduction of the First-begotten into the inhabited world is the greatest epoch in history. Antecedent ages looked onward to it; subsequent ages date from it, and have been influenced by it to a degree far surpassing human conception. 3. *A significant command.* "He saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." Whether these words are quoted from Deut. xxxii. 43 (Septuagint) or Ps. xcvi. 7, or whether both passages were in the mind of the writer, we shall not attempt to determine. To us it seems most probable that he quotes from Deuteronomy. But we turn to the homiletic suggestions of the quotation.

I. ANGELS WORSHIP, THEREFORE WORSHIP IS BECOMING IN ALL INTELLIGENT BEINGS. Angels are the highest created beings. If worship is necessary for them, it is necessary for those also who are less in their faculties and lower in their positions, yet capable of reverent approach to the Supreme Being. Man needs worship for the right and harmonious development of his being. Without worship the highest powers of his nature will decline and die for want of exercise, and its holiest possibilities will not even be attempted. Moreover, since worship is appropriate and becoming in the angels of God, it is not less so in his human creatures. No attitude is more befitting in us than that of adoration.

II. ANGELS WORSHIP THE SON OF GOD, THEREFORE HE IS WORTHY OF THE WORSHIP OF ALL INTELLIGENT BEINGS. We make this statement on the following grounds:—1. *Angels, by virtue of their intelligence, are capable of estimating his claims to their worship.* 2. *Angels, because of their holiness, would not pay their worship to one who was not worthy of it.* Hence, in worshipping the First-begotten of the Father, they are an example to us. Their worship attests his worthiness.

III. "ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP" THE SON OF GOD, THEREFORE HE IS WORTHY OF THE WORSHIP OF EVEN THE HIGHEST CREATURES. Angels even of the highest rank worship him (Isa. vi. 1—3; 1 Pet. iii. 22; Rev. v. 11—14). Hence we infer that the most intelligent, the wisest, the mightiest, the most exalted of men should worship him.

IV. ANGELS ARE UNDER OBLIGATIONS TO WORSHIP THE SON OF GOD, BUT MAN IS UNDER MORE AND MIGHTIER OBLIGATIONS TO WORSHIP HIM. Angels are commanded to worship him. "He saith, Let all the angels," etc. They worship him because of what he is in himself; because he is essentially Divine, and supremely, infinitely perfect—"the effulgence of the Father's glory," etc. They worship him also because of what he is in relation to them. He is their Creator and Sustainer. These reasons for worshipping the Son apply to us as much as to these heavenly intelligences; and, in addition to these, we are impelled to worship him by a motive more tender in its character and more mighty in its constraining force than any of these. He is our Saviour. He gave himself for us. He died for us. He redeemed us with his own precious blood. And now "he ever liveth to make intercession for us." How sacred and strong, then, are the obligations which bind us to worship him! "Worthy is the Lamb that hath

¹ Suggested by Alford, *in loco*.

been slain to receive the power," etc. (Rev. v. 12); "O come let us sing unto the Lord," etc. (Ps. xcv. 1—7) [—W. J.

Vers. 7—9.—*The Son and the angels.* "And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels," etc. Here are two quotations from the Psalms; the first from Ps. civ. 4, the second from Ps. xlv. 6, 7. Whether the latter Psalm applied primarily to Solomon or any other king of ancient Israel or not, it seems to us quite clear that it applies to the ideal King, the Messiah. Our text presents additional illustrations of the great superiority of the Son to the angels.

I. THE ANGELS ARE MESSENGERS OF GOD, THE SON IS HIMSELF GOD. They are messengers who execute his behests. "His angels do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word" (cf. Dan. ix. 21; Luke i. 19, 26). But the Son is called God by the Father. "Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Since God the Father thus addresses him he must really be God; for he calls persons and things by names which correspond to their natures. There is a wide interval between the most honoured messenger and the only begotten Son and Heir of the Father, between the highest of created beings and the uncreated God.

II. THE ANGELS ARE SERVANTS, THE SON IS THE SOVEREIGN. They are "his ministers." They serve him swiftly and joyfully. All their service is religious in its spirit. Their work is indeed worship. But, however important the nature of their service, however exalted its spirit, however perfect its performance, they are still servants and subjects. But the Son is the Sovereign. The Father saith unto him, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," etc. The throne and sceptre are symbols of royal authority. "All authority hath been given unto me," said our Lord, "in heaven and on earth;" "I sat down with my Father in his throne;" "His kingdom ruleth over all."

III. THE ANGELS SERVE IN THE PHENOMENA AND FORCES OF NATURE, THE SON REIGNS RIGHTEOUSLY IN A SPIRITUAL EMPIRE. "Who maketh his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire." These words are variously interpreted. Dean Perowne (on Ps. civ. 4) says, "He clothes his messengers with the might, the swiftness, the all-pervading subtilty of wind and fire." Alford's exposition is different: "He makes his messengers winds, i.e. he causes his messengers to act in or by means of the winds; his servants flames of fire, i.e. commissions them to assume the agency or form of flame for his purposes." And Ebrard: "Throughout the New Testament (for example, Rom. viii. 58; 1 Pet. iii. 22) the angels, at least a class of them, are regarded as *servants* of God, i.e. as personal creatures furnished with peculiar powers, through whom God works wonders in the kingdom of nature, and whom he accordingly 'makes to be storm-winds and flames of fire,' in as far as he lets them, so to speak, incorporate themselves with these elements and operations of nature. It is a truth declared in the Holy Scriptures of great speculative importance, that the miracles of nature, for example the lightnings and trumpet-sounds on Sinai, are not wrought immediately and directly by God, the Governor of the world, but are called forth at his will by exalted creatures specially qualified for this work. This position the angels hold; they are there to work terrible wonders in the sphere of nature before the eyes of a yet uncultivated people." But the relation of the Son to man is spiritual, and his rule is supremely righteous. The eighth verse gives us three ideas concerning his government. 1. *It is perfectly righteous.* "The sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." (1) His rule over man as an individual is righteous. All his requirements are in harmony with and tend to promote our well-being. In keeping his commandments "there is great reward." (2) His rule over man in his social relations is righteous. What could be more equitable or more wise than the great rule laid down by our Lord for the regulation of our conduct toward each other?—"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." (3) His rule over man in his relations to God is righteous. He requires us to obey, reverence, and love God. Is it not reasonable and equitable that the most excellent and gracious Being should be loved? that the greatest and most glorious Being should be revered? that our Creator, Sustainer, and Sovereign should be obeyed? "The Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good." His reign is not only equitable, but benevolent. 2. *It is perfectly righteous because of his love of righteousness.* He reigns in uprightness, not as a matter of policy, but of principle; this grand feature of his government springs from his own

infinite affection for righteousness, and the perfect righteousness of his character. "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity;" "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." 3. *It is perpetual because it is perfectly righteous.* "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." His reign is eternal because it is equitable. "The throne is established by righteousness." Earthly

"Empires wane and wax,
Are founded, flourish, and decay."

But "of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end," etc. (Isa. ix. 7). "He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

IV. THE JOY OF THE ANGELS IS MUCH INFERIOR TO THAT OF THE SON. "Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Notice: 1. *The nature of this anointing.* "Anointed thee with the oil of gladness." This anointing does not indicate the inauguration of our Lord to his mediatorial office. The figure is taken from the custom of anointing the head of the guests at festivals (Ps. xxiii. 5), and is intended to set forth the supreme joy of the Son upon the completion of his redemptive work, and his exaltation to "the right hand of the Majesty on high." 2. *The reason of this anointing.* "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee." Because of the perfection of his character, and of his life and work upon earth, the Father has blessed him with supreme joy. 3. *The extent of this anointing.* "Above thy fellows," or associates. Since the design of the writer is to exhibit the superiority of the Son "to the angels, we must, I think, take *μετέχους* as representing other heavenly beings, partakers in the same glorious and sinless state with himself, though not in the strict sense his 'fellows.'¹ His joy is deeper, higher, greater, intenser than that of any angel. Behold, then, how much greater is the Son than the angels in all the points which have come under our notice!—W. J.

Vers. 10—12.—*The Son and the universe.* "And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation," etc. The main subject of the writer is still the same—the superiority of the Son to the angels; and he here adduces further proofs of his superiority by setting forth the relations of the Son to the universe, in words which he quotes from Ps. cii. 25—27.

I. THE SON IS THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE. "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands." Notice here: 1. *His existence before the universe.* In the beginning he laid the foundation of the earth. When was that? Six thousand years ago? Nay, millions of years ago. The expression takes us "back to the fathomless abyss of ages of ages." Yet the existence of the Son takes us back beyond that, to us, incomprehensibly remote period. As the artist must have existed before the picture which he painted, and the architect before the edifice which he designed, so the Son existed before the universe which he made. "His goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." 2. *His agency in the creation of the universe.* He "laid the foundation of the earth," etc. The heavens and the earth have not always existed; they had a beginning. They were not self-originated, but were made by Another. In the strict sense of the word, they were created by our Lord. He did not merely arrange or form the heavens and the earth out of pre-existent materials; he created them. He "laid the foundation." He began at the beginning, etc.

II. HE PRESIDES OVER THE CHANGES OF THE UNIVERSE. "They all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed." Changes are ever going on in the universe. Spring with its fresh and youthful beauty passes into the glowing and gorgeous summer, etc. There are changes in the earth and in the seas. Even the mountains, which seem so stable and immutable, are subject to change. Suns and stars also are mutable. The heavens and the earth are growing old; they have had their infancy and youth, etc. These changes are not effected by blind, unintelligent forces or laws. The Son of God superintends all of them. He is the Framer of all the laws of Nature, and the Force of all her forces. He is the

¹ See Alford's note in support of this interpretation.

Sustainer as well as the Creator of the universe. To the thoughtful and devout man this fact imparts a deeper, tenderer interest and attraction to the changes which take place in nature. Our gracious Saviour and Lord is also the Superintendent and Sovereign of the universe.

III. HE IS UNCHANGEABLE AMIDST THE CHANGES OF THE UNIVERSE. "But thou art the same." He is the same in his being and character, in his will and purposes. Presiding over a universe in which all things are continually changing, yet with him there "is no variableness or shadow of turning." He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." He is the same in knowledge. His understanding is infinite, and he knoweth all things. He is the same in purpose. The writer of this Epistle speaks of "the immutability of his counsel." "He is of one mind." He is the same in affection. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, nor shall the covenant of my peace be removed." "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." What an inspiration this supplies to trust in him! It was thus, indeed, that these words were originally employed by the psalmist; for, as Ebrard points out, it is not "his unchangeableness as the immaterial Spirit that is spoken of (in Pa. cii. 27), but the unchangeableness of Jehovah in his acts, in his relation to Israel, in a word, the Divine *covenant-faithfulness*." And upon this the psalmist bases his hope of the restoration of prosperity to Israel. Because he is immutable in his character and purposes and relation to his people, we may safely confide in him. "He abideth faithful; for he cannot deny himself."

IV. HE SURVIVES THE DISSOLUTION OF THE UNIVERSE. "They shall perish; but thou remainest. . . . And thy years shall not fail." We do not think that the annihilation of the heavens and earth is taught here, but that their present form and aspect shall pass away. Their substance will remain, but their present appearance will perish. "The day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

"The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve;
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind."

(Shakespeare.)

But the Lord shall remain for ever and ever. As he existed before the universe, so shall he exist when its present forms have disappeared for ever. He is "from everlasting to everlasting." "I am the First and the Last, and the Living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore."

CONCLUSION. How immeasurably greater, then, is the Son than the angels! They could not create a world; but he created the entire universe. They have no sovereign control over the transformations of any world; but he is the supreme Agent effecting all the changes in every province of all worlds. They change; their knowledge changes by way of increase, and with new discoveries they have new admirations; their affections also change, growing more deep and intense; but he is superior to all change—the Immutable. They are not essentially immortal; their continued existence depends upon him; but he is essentially immortal—"the living One," the Eternal. Seeing that the Son of God is immutable and eternal, we have the strongest encouragement to trust in him at all times. Both in his power and in his willingness to save he is ever the same, and "he ever liveth." His "years shall not fail."—W. J.

Vers. 13, 14.—*The sovereignty of the Son and the service of the angels.* "But to which of the angels said he at any time," etc.? The writer is still treating of the pre-eminence of the Son over the angels; and he shows it in the facts that he is a Sovereign and they are servants.

I. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE SON OF GOD. "But to which of the angels said he at any time, sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool?" This quotation the writer makes from Pa. cx. This psalm is confessedly Messianic. It is

frequently quoted in the New Testament as applying to our Lord. "And no psalm more clearly finds its ultimate reference and completion only in Christ." The quotation teaches that: 1. *The Son is exalted to the mediatorial throne.* "Sit thou on my right hand." "He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." (See our notes on "The exaltation of his position" as stated in ver. 8.) 2. *He is exalted by the highest will.* "But to which of the angels said he at any time," etc.? "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand," etc.; "Him God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour." 3. *He is exalted with the sublimest expectation.* "Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet." Here are several points. (1) Our Lord has enemies; e.g. ignorance, superstition, unbelief, vice, crime, wicked men, etc. (2) These enemies will certainly be subjugated to him. Their subjugation is guaranteed by the Most High: "Till I make," etc. (3) These enemies will be completely subjugated to him. "Thine enemies the footstool of thy feet." The reference is to the ancient custom of conquerors placing their feet upon the necks of vanquished nobles or princes in token of their complete subjection (cf. Josh. x. 24). (4) He is waiting their subjugation with assured expectation.

II. THE SERVICE OF THE ANGELS OF GOD. "Are they not all ministering spirits," etc.? Notice: 1. *The nature of the angels.* "Spirits." We do not enter upon the question whether angels are pure spirits or not. It seems to us that they are not without some form or vesture; that they are not "unclothed, but clothed upon." Their bodies are spiritual. "There is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body." Angelic forms are not gross and material, but refined and ethereal. They do not impede their activities or clog their aspirations, but are the exquisite vesture of their being and the suitable vehicle of their power. (On the qualities of these spirits, see introduction of our homily on vers. 3, 4.) 2. *The office of the angels.* "Ministering spirits." (1) They are servants of God. Alford: "The *diakonia* is not a *waiting upon men*, but a fulfilment of their office as *diakones* of God." And Robert Hall: "They are not the servants of the Church, but the servants of Christ for the benefit of the Church." They are "ministers of his that do his pleasure" (Ps. ciii. 20, 21). (2) They are servants of God on behalf of his people. "Sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation;" or, "Sent forth for ministry on account of those who shall be heirs of salvation." Christians are called "heirs of salvation" because they "are children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 14—17). And the salvation which they shall inherit is not mere deliverance from danger or release from the penalty of sin; but complete and everlasting salvation; transformation into the image and participation in the blessedness of the Lord. Unto these children of God angels minister. The nature of their ministry in ancient times we are able to gather from the Bible; e.g. to Lot (Gen. xix.); to Elijah (1 Kings xix. 4—8); to Elisha (2 Kings vi. 16, 17); to Daniel (Dan. vi. 22; ix. 20—27; x. 10—21); to Zacharias (Luke i. 11—20); to Mary (Luke i. 26—38); to the shepherds (Luke ii. 9—14); to Mary Magdalene and other women (Luke xxiv. 4—7; John xx. 11—13); to the apostles immediately after the Ascension (Acts i. 10, 11); to the apostles in prison (Acts v. 19, 20); to St. Peter (Acts xii. 7—10); to St. Paul (Acts xxvii. 23, 24). They also ministered to our Lord after his temptation in the wilderness (Matt. iv. 11), and in his agony in Gethsemane (Luke xxii. 43). And there are statements of Holy Scripture which bear upon their ministry. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him," etc. (Ps. xxxiv. 7); "He shall give his angels charge over thee," etc. (Ps. xci. 11, 12). They minister to us now chiefly by their influence upon our spirits. They quicken within us true thoughts and pure feelings; they help us to detect Satanic suggestions and to repel Satanic solicitations; they inspire the timid with courage, and whisper hope to the despondent—

"And the wearied heart grows strong,
As an angel strengthened him,
Fainting in the garden dim
'Neath the world's vast woe and wrong."

(Johann Rist.)

They suggest caution and watchfulness to the unwary; by their serene invisible presence they solace the sufferer; and they serve about the dying bed of the saint,

and convey the emancipated spirit to its heavenly rest. "Lazarus . . . was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." (3) They are commissioned by God for this service. He appoints to each one his sphere of ministry; and by him they are "sent forth" to fulfil their commissions.

"Oh, th' exceeding grace
Of highest God that loves his creatures so,
And all his works with mercy doth embrace,
That blessed angels he sends to and fro,
To serve to wicked man, to serve his wicked foe.

"How oft do they their silver bowers leave,
To come to succour us that succour want!
How oft do they with golden pinions cleave
The fitting skies, like flying pursuivant,
Against foul fiends to aid us militant!
They for us fight, and watch, and duly ward,
And their bright squadrons round about us plant;
And all for love, and nothing for reward.
Oh, why should heavenly God to men have such regard?"

(Spenser.)

CONCLUSION. Learn: 1. *The dignity of the Christian.* Angels minister unto him. God cares for him; for he sends forth the angels to promote his interests. 2. *The dignity of service.* Angels, the highest orders of created beings, serve God by ministering unto little children, distressed Christians, and afflicted saints. 3. *The supreme dignity of the Son of God.* He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many;" and now he "is on the right hand of God, having gone into heaven; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." Well does Dr. J. H. Newman say, "When we survey Almighty God surrounded by his holy angels, his thousand thousands of ministering spirits, and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before him, the idea of his awful majesty rises before us more powerfully and impressively. We begin to see how little we are, how altogether mean and worthless in ourselves, and how high he is and fearful. The very lowest of his angels is indefinitely above us in this our present state; how high, then, must be the Lord of angels! The very seraphim hide their faces before his glory, while they praise him; how shamefaced, then, should sinners be when they come into his presence!"—W. J.

Vers. 1, 2.—The two Testaments a progressive revelation of God. These verses form the key-note of the Epistle. The Hebrew Christians were being cast out from Jewish worship and fellowship. To be excluded from the temple, the centre of national unity, the home of the people to whom pertained "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God, and the promises, and the fathers," was to be reduced to the level of the uncovenanted Gentiles. The writer encourages them in their trial by exhibiting the far greater glory of him to whom they had come than that they had been called to leave. Moreover, the old dispensation was hastening to its end; Judaism was dying out; the temple-worship was about to cease. The writer foretells this in prophetic symbolism (ch. xii. 26, 27). Thus he seems to stand on the ruins of an old world. But the Epistle is to show a new world rising from its ashes—the first done away that the second may be established. The stars are fading, but only because the sun has risen; the types are cast aside, but because the reality has come. Priest and sacrifice, altar and temple, national greatness and sacred lineage,—they are all going. "Let them go," says he, "for in their place has appeared with unspeakable glory the great fulfilment of them all—the Lord Jesus, who abideth for ever." That is the substance of the Epistle—the glory of the old economy fulfilled and surpassed in Christ. The subsequent chapters are but "a prolonged echo of this opening strain." The subject of these words is—*The two Testaments a progressive revelation of God.*

I. THEY TEACH THAT IN HOLY SCRIPTURE GOD HAS SPOKEN TO MAN. "He spake . . . he hath spoken." *We might expect God to speak because a revelation is necessary.* The world needs God, perishes without him, cries out after him. The world cannot

find God; to the utmost earthly wisdom he is unknown. God is a God of goodness and love; his works declare it; then God must reveal himself to man. 1. *Scripture declares itself to be God's voice.* Christ and the apostles affirm this of the Old Testament. You cannot believe in Christ without accepting the Old Testament as an infallible declaration of the Divine will; for so he accepted it. They also affirm this of their own teaching in the New Testament: "We speak not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." 2. *The effects of Scripture prove that this witness it bears to itself is true.* As the apostles proved their mission by "signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost," so does the Bible; that it is a divinely inspired utterance is proved by Divine results. It meets the complicated needs of human nature, satisfies the heart, opens blind eyes, casts out evil spirits, transforms the character, regenerates the world, turns the wilderness into paradise. It does what only God can do; then God is in it.

II. THEY TEACH THAT IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST WE HAVE GOD'S PERFECT UTTERANCE TO MAN. "God . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son."

1. *Since God is the Author of both revelations, we may expect to find the new in the old.* "God spake to the fathers . . . God hath spoken to us." And God is One; then we must expect to find the revelation one. Scripture is not two books, but a unity. See this in its outline; it begins with, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth;" it ends with the creation of the new heavens and earth. It begins with the story of man's expulsion from the garden—paradise lost; it ends with the vision of redeemed man dwelling under the tree of life, on the banks of the river of the water of life—paradise regained; and between the beginning and the end we have the steps by which that develops into this. Thus the New Testament and the Old throw mutual light on each other; we cannot sever them without hurt. He who only reads one knows neither. 2. *Since Christ is the Substance of the New Testament, the new revelation will be a distinct advance on the old.* The text contrasts as well as compares them. There is a sense in which Christ may be said to be the Substance of the Old Testament—"To him give all the prophets witness;" and we do not understand it unless we read it with Christ as the key. But in a far higher sense is he the Substance of the New. "God spake to the fathers in many parts," i.e. in fragments. One aspect of truth was seen in one type, another in another; they needed to be combined if the full truth was to be known. "And in divers ways," by types, prophecies, requirements, providences, angelic ministry, human teachers, etc.; thus the old revelation had great disadvantages. Mark the contrast: "He hath spoken unto us by his Son." No longer in fragments or by many voices, but by one living Person, the embodiment of the Father's thoughts concerning us; "the Word" made flesh. Christ not only the Messenger, but the Message. 3. *Since Christ is God the Son, there can be no revelation beyond what is given in him.* As long as God spoke by human teachers a greater and better might arise; but when he spake by his Son the climax was reached. The Son knows the Father perfectly, and can make no mistake as to the mind of the Father. To know how God feels about men, learn of Christ. "This is my beloved Son: hear him." To know what God is, look at Christ. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." To know what God would give, study Christ. He is God's "unspeakable Gift;" "in him are hid all the treasures," etc. All that God has to say to us we hear in Jesus, and there can be nothing beyond that.

III. THEY TEACH THAT, IN HAVING SPOKEN TO MAN, GOD HAS PLACED HIM UNDER SOLEMN RESPONSIBILITY. "God hath spoken!" What then? 1. *If God has spoken, it leaves man's ignorance without excuse.* No one with this Book need be in ignorance on Divine things. If God has spoken it is to teach us something; then he cannot have spoken so unintelligibly that we cannot understand him. If he has spoken here, we may rely on this Book as on a rock. Distinguish between human interpretation of truth and the truth itself; but when you have discovered the truth, hold it and assert it positively. What is truth? What God hath said. 2. *If God has spoken, his Word must be man's ultimate authority.* We must have infallibility or we can have no rest. Where is it? The Church in her history has proved that she is not infallible. Man's moral consciousness proves that it is not infallible, for the "inner light" in different men points in different directions, is perverted by sin, bribed into silence, educated into error. There is no infallibility if it be not in the Bible. But it is here, for here

God hath spoken. Then find your creed in it, and base your life on it, making it in all matters the final and authoritative court of appeal. It must be madness to oppose personal opinion or expediency to what the Lord says. 3. *If God has spoken, irreverence and neglect of Scripture are man's loss and shame.* "God hath spoken!" Then with what solemnity should we listen to his voice; with what constancy should we draw near to this temple to hear his will; and with what awe, taking our shoes from our feet, as on holy ground! Think of God speaking, and no "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth," rising from our heart! Are you neglecting Scripture? Remember God has no other voice after this; *Christ is his last appeal to men.* "Having, therefore, one Son, his well-beloved, he sent him *last* unto them, saying, They will reverence my Son." "God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son;" to be deaf to that last appeal is to have God speechless to us for ever.—C. N.

Vers. 2, 3.—*The surpassing glory of Christ, who is the Substance of the Christian revelation.* I. THIS PASSAGE SETS FORTH THE PERFECT DEITY OF CHRIST. If the doctrine of the Trinity is not here, it is at least implied that in the Godhead there are more Persons than one. "God hath spoken by his Son;" "God hath appointed him;" "Through him God made," etc. Then the Father and Son are distinct Persons. But, as clearly, they are one God, for there are statements here with reference to the Son which could not be made of one less than Deity. The Deity of Christ is here set forth in three particulars. 1. *In his possession of the Divine nature.* "The effulgence of his glory, the very image of his substance." Not "the brightness of his glory," as though there were one point where God's glory is greatest, and that point Christ; but "the effulgence," the shining forth of what else would be hidden. The beams of light are the effulgence of the sun; without them we could not see the sun or know he is there. So Christ is "God manifest in the flesh." Not "the image of God," as though parallel with "Let us make man in our image;" but "the very image of his substance." The idea is that of a showing forth what else would be concealed. "The Image of the invisible God;" "No man hath seen God," . . . the only begotten . . . hath declared him." Christ is the showing forth, shining forth on man of God, so that "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father." But this would be impossible unless he were himself God. A created being can utter something about God, or bear faint resemblance to him, but he who reveals God perfectly must be God's coequal self. 2. *In his fulfilment of the Divine work.* "Through whom he made the worlds, . . . upholding all things by the word of his power." Only God can create. But "all things were made by Christ; without him was not," etc. Take the hundred and fourth psalm, "the natural theology of the Jews," and in every verse in which David speaks of the natural world subsisting on God's bounty you may insert the word "Jesus." Where Coleridge, in his 'Ode to Sunrise in the Vale of Chamounix,' makes snow-clad peak, and thundering avalanche, and mysterious glacier, and verdant valley, and azure sky, echo back the one word "God," we may substitute the word "Jesus." Isaiah heard the angels sing, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." But "this spake he of Jesus;" that greatness is that of Deity. 3. *In his occupation of the Divine position.* "Whom he hath appointed Heir of all things." Christ on the throne of the universe, "Lord of all." That involves a right to the homage of all, the position of Controller of all, and the end for which all things exist. That can only be true of God. "Jehovah reigneth: he doeth his will," etc.; "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only;" "The Lord hath made all things for himself." Christ can look abroad on everything that is and happens, and say, "It is mine." And when the end comes, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of angels will be heard crying, "Worthy is the Lamb to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing;" and every creature which is in heaven and on the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, will respond, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne."

II. THIS PASSAGE SETS FORTH THE UNION OF DEITY AND HUMANITY IN ONE GLORIOUS PERSON. No word about Christ's humanity, but the idea is here. The passage could not have been written had not God become man. For it declares his Godhead. Then he was God from everlasting. But mark the expressions: "Appointed Heir of all things;" "Made better than the angels." Neither of those expressions can you apply to Deity.

As God, Christ has an inalienable property in the universe, and cannot be "appointed" heir to it; so, too, he is better than the angels, and cannot be "made" better. He who can be "appointed heir" and "made better" must be a creature. Here, then, is a great mystery; there must be a sense in which Christ who was God, was also, at some time, a creature. This would be inexplicable but for our knowledge of the Incarnation. See what this points to. 1. *The assumption by him of human nature.* We depend for our knowledge of that entirely on Scripture; but there it is stated plainly, "The Word was God . . . the Word was made flesh." He who creates and upholds and is Heir of all things, he who is "the effulgence," etc., was born, and lived, and suffered, and worked, and obeyed, and died, and was buried as man. 2. *The necessity for the union of these two natures for his mediatorial work.* Apart from the Incarnation Christ could be no Saviour. Since the Law had been given to man, man must keep it if God's moral government is to be vindicated; and since man had broken the Law, by man must the penalty be endured. The Saviour, therefore, must be man. But the race had sinned; no man, therefore, could redeem his brother; none, moreover, who was not under personal obligation to fulfil the Law. The Saviour, therefore, must be God. The Incarnation alone met the necessity. 3. *The reassumption of Divine glory in the capacity of Mediator.* Christ ascended to the throne of the universe as *God-Man*; that explains his being "appointed" to that position. As God he had an inalienable right to it; his appointment to it was in that twofold nature he had adopted as Redeemer; he was always "Head over all things," but on his ascension he was made "Head over all things to the Church." He has now received his eternal glory for the good of his people. All he is and has as God, he holds in pursuance of his redemptive work. What a future for the world, when the glory and resources of the God-Head are given over to secure its salvation! What security and benediction for the people of God!

III. THIS PASSAGE SETS FORTH THE RELATION OF THIS GLORIOUS PERSON TO A SINFUL WORLD. The worth of dwelling on the glory of Christ is in the fact of the relation he has entered into with regard to men; to cherish the thought of his greatness is to find redemption glow with a new meaning. What is Christ to man as Redeemer? The Old Testament speaks of him as Prophet, Priest, and King. All these are in our text. "God hath spoken unto us by his Son"—*there is Christ our Prophet.* "He made purification of sins"—*there is Christ our Priest.* "He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high"—*there is Christ our King.* 1. *Think of his prophetic work in the light of his glorious nature.* What does he teach? He is not merely the voice, he is "the Word." He himself is what God says to us; the substance of the gospel is just *Christ*. How much we hear in him when we know that he who, as Jesus of Nazareth, was humbled, sorrowful, bruised, accursed for us, was the God of such surpassing glory! In proportion as we understand that glory will be the force and sweetness of the message heard in beholding Jesus, that "God is love." 2. *Think of his priestly work in the light of his glorious nature.* The expression, "he made purification of sins," was used in the sense in which the Hebrews would naturally understand it—the sense of cleansing of sin by sacrifice—and evidently refers to Christ's substitutionary sacrifice, "the offering of his body once for all." But what wonderful light beams on that redemption when we know the glory of him who made it! What grace is in it then! what security! It is the glory of Jesus that makes him able to save the worst. It is because he is God that his blood cleanseth us from all sin. 3. *Think of his kingly work in the light of his glorious nature.* The sitting down on the right hand of the Majesty on high must refer to his *mediatorial* kingship, for it was after he had made purification of sins. But think of the glory of that kingship. Christ "Heir of all things" for us. For us he is Lord of providence; then providence is on our side. For us he is Lord of all temporal resources; then the supply of our needs is assured. For us he is Lord of the spiritual world; then no foe above our strength shall assail us. He who on the highest throne is crowned with glory is as truly there for us as for us he was crowned with thorns. The hand which now wields the sceptre of the universe, wields it as truly for us as for us it was pierced at Calvary. What safety, what blessing, that means for the Church!

We cannot speak of the glory of the Son of God as we would, nor think of it as it is; but we may meditate on it, rejoice in it, try to understand it better, and praise him for it, till in the fuller light and with the fuller powers of the higher world—

"We at his feet shall fall,
Join in the everlasting song,
And crown him Lord of all."

C. N.

Vers. 4—14.—*The greatness of the angels revealing the greatness of the Lord.* Our ideas with regard to the angels are mostly vague, or poetic, or formal, never evoking holy thought or inspiring praise, or breathing on our soul an hour's calm, or strengthening us to strike a blow at sin. We think there is nothing practical about the doctrine of angels, and so we pass it by. We have Christ, we say; we do not need the angels; they who have the king overlook the courtiers. Yet a considerable portion of Scripture is occupied with instruction concerning them. So we conclude there is great spiritual worth in the Bible doctrine of angels, if we understand it right. What this is we may gather from the purpose of the passage before us. To discover the reason for which the writer here dwells on it at length is to have the key to the question—What benefit can this doctrine afford to our spiritual life? The writer's aim is to show that the new revelation is better than the old, and to this end he sets forth the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. The greatness of Christ is his theme, and in unfolding this he begins with the doctrine of angels; and there we see the use of the doctrine. By an adequate knowledge of the angels we arrive at a more adequate knowledge of Christ; their greatness, who are his creatures and servants, affords a fuller conception of his own glorious majesty. The subject, therefore, is—*The greatness of the angels revealing the greatness of the Lord.*

I. THE GREATNESS OF THE ANGELS. This is implied in the fourth verse—"having become by so much better than the angels." Unless they were most exalted, the writer could not venture to bring Christ into comparison with them. How great must they be of whom it can be written that Christ is greater! Let us think of them briefly. We might almost assume, apart from Scripture, that angelic beings exist. In other departments of nature there is a regular gradation from lower to higher forms of life; it is therefore improbable that man is the only creature of his order. Man's powers are so limited that there is evidently room for a race, or indeed for an ascending series of races, of intelligent beings superior to man. Moreover, when we consider the greatness of God, and the worship and love and service due to him, it is hardly conceivable that the dwellers on one small planet are the only creatures in the universe capable of rendering these. Nor can we imagine that, if man had not been created, God would have been left without worshippers, or that when men fell there were none left to praise him. When we turn to Scripture this assumption is confirmed. There we read of "principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world;" an "innumerable company of angels;" angel and archangel, cherubim and seraphim; "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." 1. *Think of the sublime position of these celestial beings.* As in Isa. vi. 1—3 or Rev. v. 11. They have nearest access to Jehovah, surround his throne, attend his Person, behold his glory. That future blessedness which is the highest hope of the people of God is already inherited, to a great degree, by the angels. They are at home in heaven. 2. *Think of their holy character.* With no human imperfection, no stain of sin, for ever beholding the holiness of the Most Holy, how perfectly they must reflect his holy image!

"Eternal Light! Eternal Light!

How pure the soul must be
That stands within thy searching sight,
And shrinks not, but with calm delight
Can live and look on thee!"

3. *Think of their glorious nature.* "His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow, and for fear of him the keepers became as dead men;" "I saw another mighty angel clothed with a cloud; and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire." The "living creatures" were "full of eyes before and behind." Some are called "seraphim," i.e. burning ones. The cherubim were described by a combined symbol of man, lion, eagle, ox, i.e. utmost intelligence, strength, flight, and service. 4. *Think of their exalted work.* See

instances in Scripture of the varied and high missions of judgment and mercy and ministry on which they are sent. They serve the King ceaselessly. Our prayer for earth is that the Divine will may be done here as in heaven. Jacob's vision is always being fulfilled, and the ancient hymn of the Church, "To thee all angels cry aloud, the heavens," etc.

II. THE GREATNESS OF THE ANGELS REVEALS THE GREATNESS OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. That is the substance of vers. 5—13. These verses consist of a series of quotations from the Book of Psalms. From certain psalms (which were applied to Christ) the writer draws certain statements with regard to our Lord and the angels, and he uses these to show that the greatness of the angels illustrates the surpassing greatness of the Redeemer. There are, thus, three lines of contrast drawn here. 1. *Christ is the God whom these exalted angels worship.* (Vers. 5, 6.) In a sense peculiar to himself the Lord Jesus Christ is *God the Son*. Others may be sons of God, but he is the "*Only-begotten*," which must mean equality and oneness with the Father; for he who commands, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only," says also of Christ, "And let all the angels of God worship him." Christ the supreme Object of the worship of these exalted and innumerable angelic beings. Rank above rank, angel and archangel, principality and power, cherubim and seraphim, rise in the order of being and glory, these above those, others higher still, and still others higher, till the highest rank of created majesty and splendour is reached. But far above the highest is one glorious central throne, round which these countless hosts all circle, and before which they bow in worship—and the Lamb is in the midst of the throne. 2. *Christ is the Creator from whose hands they came.* (Ver. 7.) In the great powers of nature are depicted the resistless might and rapid movement of the heavenly hosts as they sweep through space, unrestrained by the laws that bind us lower creatures. But however great they be, they owe all to him, the Son, whose handiwork they are. "He maketh his angels winds." As the work extols the worker, and the greater the work the more glorious the worker is seen to be, so of all created things none more truly extols him by whom all were made, than the exceeding glory of the angelic host. 3. *Christ is the King whose will they perform.* (Vers. 8—14.) The idea here is in the main that Christ is the King, righteous, eternal, universal, victorious. The angels only stand as servants before him, or fly at his bidding. How great must the King be that has such a retinue (see Eph. i. 20—22)! Angels escorted him on his ascension; attend him in his redeeming work, and rejoice with him over repentant sinners; fly from his presence to minister to his people; when he comes in judgment he "will bring all the holy angels with him." How great the King served by myriads of such servants as these, and leading in his train princes, powers, potentates, dominions, of such surpassing glory!

III. THE GREATNESS OF CHRIST AND THE ANGELS REVEALS THE GREATNESS OF THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVER. See what a practical truth we have been considering. The apostle closes this sublime description of Christ with its bearing on "*the heirs of salvation*." This chapter leads up to them. Very suggestive that it does close with that word. The greater the angels are, the greater Christ is. The greater Christ, our Helper, Friend, Saviour, Sanctifier, is, the greater we, his people, are. See here: 1. *The believer's greatness in being made, in so glorious a universe, the subject of Divine love.* How great the contrast between man and the angels! And of them the universe is full. This shows the marvel of the grace which fixed its love on the fallen sons of Adam. Why should our lower and comparatively insignificant race be the object of redeeming mercy? "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him?" How great is man when he becomes the object of such love! 2. *The believer's greatness in the exalted relationship between him and the celestial beings.* Take the first verse of this passage: Christ "became so much better than the angels;" that can only refer to him as God-Man, for as God he was better than the angels. Christ, then, holds this position as Mediator; that is, *for us*; the greatness of Christ is on our behalf. Take the last verse of the passage: "Are they not all," etc.? *All* the angels, however high their rank, wait unseen on us, doing their Lord's will. However lowly the "heir of salvation" may be, angelic messengers are passing from the throne to him perpetually, upholding, guiding, protecting, comforting, enriching. "Cherubim rally at his side, and the Captain of that host is God." How great is the believer, heir with such a King, and attended by such ministrants! 3. *The believer's greatness in the glory of that future state of*

which angelic life affords a glimpse. Christ said that in the resurrection we should be "equal to the angels." What may that mean of new powers, dignity, service, holiness, and all immortal! But the tenor of Scripture affirms that we shall surpass the angels. They are servants, we are sons—"joint-heirs with Christ." They bow before his throne, we are to sit thereon. How great is "the heir of salvation"! This unspeakable glory is the end of his journey, and the King of kings himself, and the celestial hosts, his convoy by the way!—C. N.

Vers. 1—3.—*Christ as Prophet of the Church.* This Epistle was written to those Jewish Christians who were in danger of relapsing from their profession of faith in Jesus and returning to the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Jewish Law. If we consider that they had been brought up in the acknowledgment of the Mosaic rites as being of Divine origin, with the power of early impressions; that it was a vast step from Moses to the simple and spiritual system of the gospel; that there were many forms of persecution to be endured, and that the love of many waxed cold, it will appear that such an Epistle was necessary, and admirably adapted, by its assertion of the superiority of Christ to all the prophets and priests of the past, to prevent apostasy and restore and confirm their faith.

I. HERE ARE FOUND THE PROGRESSIVENESS OF DIVINE REVELATION. God conveyed portions of truth to Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, and the prophets; and in divers manners, as in vision to Abraham, face to face to Moses, by Urim and Thummim, by proverb and psalm, and by prediction and apocalyptic images. This was gradual revelation, and was suited to the ages of the Church before Christ came, who treated his disciples in this way and said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (John xvi. 12).

II. NOTE THE PERFECTION OF CHRIST AS THE PROPHET OF THE CHURCH. This is to be seen in his superiority to all preceding teachers who were sent by the Divine Spirit to make known the will of God. He was the Son: 1. *In his resemblance to his Father in creative energy.* "Without him was not anything made that was made." 2. *In resemblance of sustaining power,* by which he upholds all law, preserves all harmony in creation, and maintains all life, from the highest seraphs to the humblest believers, and even to the lowest forms of existence. 3. *Resemblance in personal glory.* Jesus Christ is the Brightness of the Father's glory, and the express Image of his person; the latter idea drawn from the monarch's portrait stamped upon golden coin. Such words are the best human language supplies; and the treasures of these Divine ideas are put in the earthen vessels of our speech, and fall infinitely below the sublime reality. Our Lord's condition on the holy mount best illustrates the thought of his resemblance to the glory of his Father, when the ineffable resplendence which streamed from himself appeared to add emphasis to the words, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." 4. *Resemblance of power of enjoyment.* He is to be "Heir of all things." Abraham was to be heir of the world; but here is a wider inheritance, which no finite mind can ever grasp. Jesus Christ is to be the Heir of all the results of his incarnation, ministry, and sacrifice. He is to see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied; and through eternal ages he will receive the gratitude and adoration of a "number that no man can number." All judgment is committed to him, and on his head are many crowns.

III. OBSERVE THE PERFECTION OF CHRIST AS THE PRIEST. There is here a suggested contrast to priests of the Jewish Law. It is said he purged our sins by himself; then he stands before us as the One in opposition to the many who did not continue by reason of death. Aaron, Eli, Zadok, and Joshua successively disappear. There is a contrast between other priests and our Lord, who did not offer victims, as sheep, goats, lambs, and kids; but offered himself through the eternal Spirit. There is unlikeness inasmuch as the services of the ancient priests did not purify the conscience; but the sacrifice of our Lord cleanses by faith from all sin, restores to the Divine favour, and imparts the enjoyment of Christian hope. There is a contrast between the priests of the old Law in respect of dignity. The ancient ministers of the temple had to offer for their own sins, and then for the sins of the people; our Lord was "holy, harmless, separate from sinners." The descendants of Aaron had to minister in the holy of holies when it was darkened by the smoke of sweet incense, and none dare to sit down near the mercy-seat; but the Redeemer sits down "at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Once more, the Jewish high priests ministered for their own nation, while other populations in Egypt, Arabia, and Syria had no share in their service; but our Lord is exalted, and sits a priest upon his throne, and a multitude of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues enjoy the benefit and blessing of his ministry.—B.

Vers. 4—9.—*Christ superior to the angels.* As angels had an important ministry under the Law of Moses, it was desirable to show the Christians who had been drawn from Judaism, and were disposed to return to it, the superiority of our Lord to them in their nature and office.

I. THIS APPEARS IN THE GLORY OF HIS NAME, which is his by nature and inheritance. Angels are called “sons of God,” and rejoiced as creation with its wonders rose before their view. Israel was named “Jehovah’s firstborn” and his “children;” and magistrates and judges were, as bearing the Divine image of authority, called “sons of God.” But no monarch or angel is called “the Son,” and this our Lord seems to recognize. When about to ascend from earth he said, “I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God” (John xx. 17).

II. THE ROYALTY OF THE SON OF GOD IS ASSERTED. It is said in Ps. ii. 7, “This day have I begotten thee;” and in 2 Sam. vii. 14 it is written, “I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a son.” These passages declare in a prophetic manner the appointment of our Lord to the office and dignity of a King. He is placed above all angels, and is described as an all-conquering Monarch. The promise originally made to David is fulfilled in the person of our Lord, who, according to the angel’s message to Mary, should be called “the Son of the Most High,” and should reign over the house of Jacob for ever (Luke i. 33). “All power was given unto him in heaven and in earth.” After Daniel had seen visions of the worldly empires represented by fierce monsters, he beheld the form of the Son of man, whose dominion should last for ever.

III. THE FUTURE MANIFESTATION OF HIS GLORY IS ANNOUNCED, according to eminent authorities, in the words, “when he shall have brought his First-begotten into the world.” This refers to his second coming, when “he shall come in the glory of his Father with his holy angels.” There is to be a sublime and unrivalled manifestation of his majesty, when myriads of the angels shall come to swell his triumph and to attend him, as ministers and servants of state attend their monarch on occasions of public importance.

IV. CHRIST IS THE OBJECT OF ADORATION TO ANGELS. The text, “Let all the angels of God worship him,” is derived from the Septuagint translation of Deut. xxxii. 43, which is a part of a grand prophetic outline of the future of Israel. To offer worship presupposes that he who bends the knee is inferior to the person who is honoured. St. Peter refused worship, and said to Cornelius; “Stand up; for I also am a man.” St. John fell down at the feet of the angel and was counselled to worship God. Here, as a proof of the unutterable superiority of our Lord, we are told that the mighty angels, principalities, and powers are commanded to pay homage to him who is Lord of all.

V. THE GLORY OF HIS KINGLY CHARACTER AND RULE JUSTIFIES THEIR ADORATION. The proof is drawn from the ancient prophecy of the forty-fifth psalm, which was placed in the liturgy of the Jewish Church. Here we note the perfect holiness of Jesus Christ, who always loved righteousness and hated iniquity, and whose words, works, and sufferings shone with the Divine beauty of holiness. His sceptre was one of uprightness, and was a contrast to the crooked policy and cruel oppression of some earthly monarchs. God anointed him with the oil of gladness above all his fellows in the royal line of David—with the joy of his exaltation to the right hand of the Majesty on high, where he has an enduring throne.

“The seas shall waste, the skies in smoke decay,
Rocks fall to dust, and mountains melt away;
But fixed his Word, his saving power remains:
Thy realm for ever lasts, thy own Messiah reigns!”

The angels are ministers in his glorious kingdom, and fly with the force of mighty winds and with the swiftness of the lightning-flame. He saith, “Go,” and they go; “Come,” and they come; “Do this,” and they do it; for all are his servants.—B.

Vers. 10—12.—These verses affirm *the glory of Christ in his creative power, and in the unchangeableness of his nature*. The quotation from Ps. cii. is cited with fearless confidence as belonging to him “who was God,” and was “with God,” and without whom “was not anything made that was made.” This truth, addressed to Christian Jews by a Jewish writer, is the most conclusive proof that it was the work of the Holy Spirit to raise their minds, so jealous for the honour of Jehovah, to an understanding and cordial acknowledgment of the sublime mystery of the glorious Three-One. Our Lord is immutable and always like himself, and therefore stands in rightful contrast to angels; and to men, who are exposed to changes in action and feeling, and now are weak and then strong, now sorrowful for sin and then rejoice in forgiveness and recovered peace. He is ever the same, and amid the vicissitudes in which the foundations of the earth will be overthrown, and the fabric of heaven will become like some threadbare and worn-out garment, he will be unchangeable. This truth is repeated at the close of the Epistle, in words well known to Christian hearts, which declare that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” This thought was full of the richest consolation to those who looked with anxious eyes at the disappearance of the Mosaic Law; and is an abiding justification of the faith and hope of believers, who have begun a career of spiritual life which must be marked by changes now, changes in death and the resurrection, and through the experiences of eternity; for his word remains in all its validity and power, “Because I live, ye shall live also.”—B.

Vers. 13, 14.—The contrast between our Lord and the angels reappears in the impressive quotation from Ps. cx., which is so entirely Messianic that it is alluded to no less than ten times in the range of the New Testament. It affirms the superiority and supremacy of our Lord in so conclusive a manner that no ingenuity of perverse interpretation can successfully apply it to any monarch, priest, or warrior whatsoever. All enemies who steadfastly resist his claim must be overthrown by his righteous and sovereign might. Some have been brought down and are now under his feet. Rebellious Jerusalem was overthrown. Western idolatries have left their witness to his power in broken columns and deserted temples. Hereafter systems of evil, false philosophies, corrupt institutions, impenitent and irreconcilable men, and probably some nations, must yield to his judicial sentence and final punishment. Some things he will dash in pieces like a potter's vessel. He sits at the right hand of the Father; but the angels are ministering spirits, and go forth at his bidding to assist and protect those who shall in time enjoy the fulness of salvation.—B.

Ver. 1.—*God speaking to men*. I. THE GENERAL TRUTH THAT GOD SPEAKS TO MEN. The possibility is assumed of such a communication from God to men. Nothing less can be meant than this—that even as one man can clearly make known the thoughts and wishes that are in him to another, so God can communicate his thoughts and wishes to a being with a nature like man. It is quite allowable to say that a voice of God speaks forth from the things he has made, just as a voice speaks forth from our works and actions; but beyond all voices we thus infer there is surely a direct utterance of God. What an inspiring thought, that at any moment a voice may come to the heart of man out of the infinite depths, not heard indeed by the outward ear, but still making evident that it is not something imagined from within, or something that rises from a purely human and earthly level! Thus we may classify the words that are spoken to a man: 1. There is soliloquy. When a man listens to his own heart, to its suggestions, its apologies, its speculations, its putting of *pros* and *cons*. There are things said and listened to which dare not come out in audible speech. 2. The speech of men to each other, full of limitations and imperfections, only too often trifling, frivolous, barbed with sneering, contempt, envy, jealousy. 3. The speech of God to men, of which the first chief thing to be noticed is that it does come from *above*; not from the confusion *within*, or the confusion *without and around*.

II. GOD SPEAKING TO CERTAIN MEN BY PROPHETS. This Epistle went forth originally within the limits of a nation. The writer is writing to Hebrews; he at once bids them look to the past, the distant past, and yet the past out of which their present had come. They had to consider their fathers, and thus the succession in which they themselves

stood. As they looked back they looked along a line illuminated by a special and heavenly light. The sacred books, the Scriptures which they have to search, are pervaded by the recorded speeches and acts of Jehovah; so that if these speeches and acts be cut out, all the rest drops into incoherent fragments. Surely this description of God here gives us one of the rules whereby we are profitably to read the Old Testament. We have in the Old Testament God speaking to the fathers—to the fathers in many generations, to the fathers in different circumstances; we have words to Israel in its beginnings, words to it in its bondage, in its wilderness and tent-life, in its settlement, in its glory as a united kingdom, in its civil discord and separation, in its idolatries, in its time of desolation by foreigners, and its final exile. Hence the opportunities for warning and threatening on the one hand, and consolation and promise on the other. It must also be considered how God spoke to each generation of the fathers by men belonging to that generation. What was true of the fathers was true of the prophets; one generation goeth and another cometh. We must not measure the prophetic work by the writings that have been preserved. There must have been many, many prophets beyond the few whose names we know, and some day all their faithfulness and usefulness may be revealed. In any case, we can estimate the class from the specimens, and while we estimate we glorify the class, seeing what God can do through the agency of brother men—picked men, it is true, but still entirely men of like passions with ourselves; and thus, while we see the glory of the prophets, we see also their limitations. The prophet lives, speaks, dies, and his work is done. When he dies another living man must rise, who has a sensible contact with his fellow-man. New times bring new needs, and new needs have to be met by new voices. Prophecy is in many parts and after many fashions, it is spoken to many generations by many prophets; but note behind all the uniting force. It is one God who speaks in all and to all. There is variety, advance, light, at the beginning, ever increasing toward the perfect day, but nowhere any discord, any contradiction. In studying the Old Testament it is wisdom to feel sure that there is harmony in its utterances, if only we can find that harmony out.

III. GOD SPEAKING TO US BY HIS SON. Jesus, of course, was a Prophet; One who came from God, had the Spirit of God in him, and spoke the words of God. But he was not a prophet as his predecessors were. The marks of frailty, ignorance, and sin are on them. Manward they may be faithful enough, speaking every word Jehovah has put in their mouths, whatever the peril, whatever the pain. But Godward, what a difference between the prophets of the Old Testament and Jesus! Jesus never speaks out of such ignorance and despondency as does Elijah. The words of Isaiah in vi. 5—7, how strangely they would sound if imagined ascending from Jesus! God has spoken to us by a Son. The one ever-living Son, as contrasted with the many-dying prophets. The prophet had his day, a glorious day if he was faithful, but brief at the longest. The day of Jesus, as God's Speaker to men, is described in that later expression of the Epistle—"the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Jesus ever liveth, not only to make intercession for us, but as the well-beloved Son of God, to speak to us the words of his Father. The words of Jesus, inwrought as they are with the very substance of the New Testament, are ever to be taken as the word of a being still living, still in contact with men, still making one in every company gathered together in his Name, still saying, "Lo, I am with you all the days, even to the consummation of the age."—Y.

Ver. 2.—*Jesus Inheritor of all things.* One position suggests another. The idea of sonship naturally leads on to the idea of inheritance. Among the Israelites especially would this be so, for inheritance is much spoken of in the Old Testament. The son looks forward to inherit and control the father's possessions. Thus, while the individual cannot defy death, the race can in a modified kind of way. And so this passion of man for transmitting his property to his posterity is here used to begin that glorifying description of Jesus which runs through this Epistle. Jesus is a Son, and if a Son, then an Heir. Moreover, inheritance is according to the father's possessions. Jesus is Heir of all things, because his Father is Maker of all things. We shall do well also, in considering this word "heir" inserted in this particular place, to bear in mind the parable of the wicked husbandmen (Matt. xxi. 33). There is little doubt that it was in the mind of the writer, and the slightest hint to the wise is enough. Thoughtful readers of the Epistle who knew their Gospels would be quick enough to take the hint.

For when thus a mention had been made of God speaking in the prophets, and then speaking in the Son, there was obviously further suggested how these prophets had been treated, and finally how the Son himself had been treated. As to how the prophets were treated, read onward from ch. xi. 32. And now the Heir comes forward. Thus we are at once brought face to face with a claim. We are not allowed time to plume ourselves on privileges, in that, while former generations had only prophets to speak to them, we have a Son. The claim is the same, whether it be made through the humblest of the prophets—even through a murmuring Jonah—or through Jesus, the Son of God. It is a claim on us for the result of our work in the great inheritance. Jesus is Heir of all things, therefore Heir of that little section in which we have been working. Let it also be recollected that Jesus, in being Heir of all things, makes us as children of God—joint-heirs. Every one who lives for Christ enriches all the sons of God. Jesus is Heir of all things that he may make believers in him sharers with him according to the widest of their capacities and opportunities. What a glorious picture of deep, exhaustless satisfaction is here, and how much beyond the dreams, generous as they are often reckoned to be, of an earthly communism!—Y.

Ver. 3.—*Jesus as the Brightness of God's glory.* I. THE GLORY OF GOD IS MANIFESTED TO MEN. Our relations of dependence upon God are exalted by our perception of him upon whom we depend. It is not as if a hand stretched out of the unseen, laying before us our daily bread, and then withdrawing itself, as if it concerned us nothing to know the Giver provided only we got the gift. God is desirous that we should both know him, the Giver, and as much of his glory as it is possible for man to know. "The glory of God" could not have been an unfamiliar phrase to Hebrew Christians. The glory of Jehovah appeared to the children of Israel just before the giving of the manna (Exod. xvi. 10). Also on Mount Sinai, at the giving of the Law. Also when the tabernacle was completed the glory of Jehovah so filled it that Moses was not able to enter (Exod. xl. 35). When Solomon built a house for Jehovah, the glory of Jehovah so filled the house that the priests could not stand to minister. Consider also the crowns of Isaiah and Ezekiel. Every created thing has its glory, and though there are times when that glory may be in retirement, yet there are other times when the glory comes forth into full manifestation. How much more, then, must there be a suitable and sufficient manifestation of the glory of God himself!

II. THE FULL MANIFESTATION OF GOD'S GLORY IS IN JESUS. The expression here, "brightness," or rather "effulgence," is in harmony with all those numerous passages in which light is connected with the revelation of God in Christ Jesus. The light which we see is but the expression of an invisible existence behind it. We speak of the rays of the sun; but what is the sun itself but condensed radiance? And so when we come to Jesus and think of the light streaming forth from him upon human ignorance, misery, and despair, we are reminded by the way in which he is here spoken of that Jesus is not to be considered by himself. By him the invisible is made visible. The love of the Father becomes a radiant, communicable emotion in the incarnate life of the Son. All those bursts of intolerable light which filled the tabernacle were but symbols of that true light, the effulgence of the Divine glory, which lighteth every man coming into the world, and which has dwelt among us in flesh as in a tabernacle. Blessed are those who can see this Divine effulgence, and discern the difference between it and the effulgence of other lights. The dwellers in the immediate district where Jesus had been brought up never thought of explaining the wonders of his life by the fact that he was the *ἀκτῖνας* of the Divine glory. Many thought it a sufficient explanation to say that he was Elijah, or Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. Consider in connection the words of Paul in 2 Cor. iv., where he speaks of the god of this world blinding the minds of unbelievers, so that there should not shine unto them the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the Image of God; and then he goes on to speak of how the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness has shined in our hearts, to illuminate them with the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.—Y.

Ver. 3.—*Jesus as the express Image of the Divine substance.* The more we ponder the various terms used for describing Jesus in the introduction to this Epistle, the more we see how the writer is striving to glorify Jesus by separating him from the common

mass of men and presenting him to our thoughts in the most intimate relation with God. It is meant to be regarded as a relation of the closest correspondence in all possible ways. To say that God is the Father and Jesus the Son is not enough; for the son does not always resemble the father; indeed, the deep differences between son and father are but too often emphasized by the natural relation between them. Hence the multiplication of terms to indicate the closeness of correspondence between Jesus and God. They are bound in one, even as the ray of light with the source from which that ray emanates. And then comes this peculiarly difficult expression concerning the *ὑπαρξίς* and the *ὑποπόδιον*. Evidently no English words can set forth exactly the meaning either of the Greek words themselves or of the relation indicated by them. We can only make a guess at the writer's drift. He is referring, we may take it, to the connection between form and essence. Every essence has its approximate form, and every form indicates a peculiar essence. Thus we always find the essence of humanity along with a certain kind of body, a certain shape, a certain arrangement of organs, a certain quality of intelligence; and wherever we see these signs we infer a peculiar essence underneath. We can know nothing of the essence apart from the form it takes, nor can we imagine the form continuing without the essence. Form and essence make up the unity. Even so the writer of this Epistle seems to look upon the unity which is constituted when God, the Essence, flows out to us in the form furnished by the person of Jesus.—Y.

Ver. 8.—*Reality over against phenomena.* It is very striking to notice in this third verse that the assertions with respect to Jesus are not at all the assertions that would have been made by the bulk of his contemporaries. They did not see all this glory being manifested, this essence of divinity shaping itself, this mighty sustaining of all things, this cleansing away of sin, this assumption of a seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Have we not to notice again and again in the level of ordinary life that what a man seems to the multitude to be doing is not at all the thing he is really doing? Many of the Cumberland peasants could see in Wordsworth only an idle man, who spent much of his time rambling about and muttering to himself. All the poems that came out of his musings and mutterings they would reckon as nothing at all. And assuredly the most conspicuous instance of this lack of understanding is to be found in the view that many have of Jesus. They see nothing of the glorious nature, the far-reaching power, the cleansing sacrifice, the lofty exaltation; and yet all these are realities. Take, for instance, that which is here spoken of Jesus: "He made through himself a purification of our sins." The Hebrew was in the habit of connecting purification of sin with certain outward appearances. He expected to see a priest known by his garments, an altar known by its construction. If Jesus had been bound, like a human sacrificial victim, on an altar and slain by a priest, then many would have had no difficulty in thinking of him as a sacrifice. If we would get to truth, we must break away from appearances and get to the essence of everything Christ has said and done. Things are not what they seem. Have we not the best of evidence in our senses every day that the sun goes round the earth? Yet it can be proved by flawless logic, to him that will understand, that the earth goes round the sun. Realities contradict appearances. The natural man has his standard of life, movement, possibility; and the spiritual man, taught and guided by the Spirit of God, has *his* standard.—Y.

Vers. 4—13.—*Christ exalted above the angels.* I. CONSIDER THE ANGELIC DIGNITY. The word "angel" as employed here to be taken in a very wide sense, as "angel" primarily denotes office and service rather than nature. Jesus himself, looked at from a certain point of view, was an angel, a messenger, an evangelist. God can make a messenger, as we are reminded in this passage, from the winds and the flame of fire: e.g. the burning bush was a messenger to Moses. But doubtless there is also a special reference to those who in the Scriptures are peculiarly indicated by the word "angel." Such a being came twice to Hagar in her need, and stayed Abraham when he was on the point of slaying Isaac in sacrifice. The angels Jacob saw ascending and descending are not to be taken as merely creatures of a dream. An angel touched the great Elijah in his solitude and despair, and more than once directed him in his goings. Notice, also, the glorious appearing to Manoah and his wife. Nor must the *dreadful* errands

of angels be forgotten—their connection with the destruction of Sodom and of Sennacherib's army. These are the visitations mentioned, but how many more there may have been unrecorded! The angelic visitations of the New Testament must particularly be recollected, because they were fresh to the knowledge of writer and readers of this Epistle. And if we are not to set down these manifestations to mere hallucination, then it is plain that the beings manifested must have belonged to a glorious order. Such a being, breaking suddenly upon the vision of a man, could not but awe, and might even terrify. Of such a one it might even be said, "Surely this is a son of God." But that would be a fallacy, springing from mere magnificence of appearance. And yet it is a fallacy which, in other shapes, will ever deceive the judgment of men till they put that judgment under guidance of the Spirit of God. Men of great intellectual power, men of genius, are reckoned to have in them something that lifts them for ever above common men. Whereas the dazzling brightness and beauty flowing from them should put us on our guard. In the Divine order of existence the spiritual man is ever higher than the natural man, although the natural man may look far more imposing. Mary saw an angel once, and probably the glory from him appealing to the senses was such as she did not see in her own Son all the time he was on earth. Angels are to be taken as the crowning illustration of all that is most magnificent and impressive in the way of outward splendour.

II. THE ELEVATION OF JESUS ABOVE THE ANGELS. To emphasize this, the writer appeals to certain passages from the Old Testament Scripture. The line of his appeal is plain. He assumed that these passages related to the Christ. He knew, and his readers knew, that Jesus was the Christ, and hence they all feel that God himself has exalted Jesus in his way far above all principality and power. And it must have been a very practical thing in those days thus to insist on the supremacy of Christ over angels. For, as there were pseudo-Christi, so there was danger of pseudo-angels. The devil appearing as an angel of light may not have been the mere figure it seems to us. Paul hints at the possibility of an angel from heaven preaching some other gospel. There might be a splendid appearance seeming to have authority in it. Spirits had to be tried whether they were of God. We know from the First Epistle to the Corinthians how the wonderful attracted men rather than the useful. And so we need to be reminded that it is not an angel, purposely glorious to the outward eye and appearing occasionally to a Zacharias or a Mary, or even as that terrible form who rolled back the door of the sepulchre and made the keepers shake and become as dead men, who is nearest God in heaven. The meek and lowly Jesus, moving about among men, despised and rejected, so that they see no beauty that they should desire him, is far above the angels. And, indeed, he also in due time and for certain purposes can appear in a visible glory which makes all angelic glory seem a common and feeble thing (Rev. i. 12—16).—Y.

Ver. 14.—*The mission of the angels.* I. THE HABITUAL POST OF THE ANGELS. They are ministering spirits, literally, "*liturgical* spirits." The work of the priests and Levites in connection with tabernacle and temple was known as a *liturgical* work. Again and again in the Septuagint the work of Aaron and his subordinates is indicated by this verb, *λειτουργεῖν*. As the angels are called *liturgical* spirits, so the priest and his subordinates might have been called *liturgical* men. They were the men who, on behalf of all the people, managed things pertaining to the worship of Jehovah. So in several passages the officials connected with the court of a king are known as *liturgical*—*liturgical* men. And if we would see what is meant by calling the angels *liturgical* spirits, we cannot do better than consider, first of all, Isa. vi. 2, 3. There we read of the six-winged seraphim, who cried one to another and said, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." Saying this, they were engaged in *liturgical* service. Then turn to Rev. iv., where we read of the four living things, each, like the seraphim, six-winged, who rest not day and night, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." These four living things were also engaged in *liturgical* services. What priest and Levite were on earth, angels were and are in heaven. Nor angels alone. The spirits of the just made perfect are joined to seraphim, and all others of the heavenly host by whatever name they may be called, in *liturgical* service.

II. THE SPECIAL SERVICE OF THE ANGELS. These liturgical spirits are sent forth on errands of helpfulness to God's people on earth in their times of emergency. They are sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation—heirs of salvation, but not yet rejoicing in a deliverance from every sort of evil. We are saved by hope; we are in process of salvation, but the process involves trials and sufferings. We are not without notable instances of what is meant by angelic service to the heirs of salvation. Jesus himself was, in a certain sense, an heir of salvation. He had to be saved from this body of death, if not from this body of sin. And concerning him we read how, at the close of the temptation, angels came and ministered to him. Then, more important still, because the service is more definitely indicated, is the opening of the prison doors to liberate the apostles (Acts iv. 19), and the after-opening to deliver Peter from the hands of Herod (Acts xii. 7). And though comparatively few such instances of *διακονία* be recorded, that is not to say that only a few happened. Nor is it to be said that angelic service has ceased. Angels may render very important and comforting services to men, although they themselves may not be seen.

III. THE EXAMPLE ANGELS THUS GIVE TO CHRISTIANS. Angels find their habitual employ in adoring God, in serving him in heavenly worship. But from worship they may at any moment be turned to work, and work most agreeable to the will and pleasure of their Master, doing something which will be felt as a help by some one who is dear to Christ. The *leitourgia* fits for the *διακονία*, and the *διακονία*, faithfully rendered, sends back with fresh zest to the *leitourgia*. There is a place for both; and we, who have also to go forth to minister to the heirs of salvation, shall find our ministry all the more effectual if only it can be truly said of us, in the best sense of the word, that we are *liturgical Christians*. That man whose reading of the Scriptures has in it not only quantity but quality, not only recollection of words but increasing perception of meaning, who reads that he may understand and obey—such a one is a liturgical Christian. He is constantly enriching his heart, getting nearer to God, and, as a matter of course, better able to serve men. We must always be serving God, whether in those things which have the formal look of Divine service, or in those which may look nothing more than a temporal ministry to men. We may at the same time be *leitourgois* towards God and *διακονοί* towards men; we can pray without ceasing, and also follow in the footsteps of him who came, not to be ministered to, but to minister.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER II.

Vers. 1—5.—INTERPOSED EXHORTATION, as explained above.

Ver. 1.—On this account (*i.e.* on account of what has been seen of the Son's superiority to the angels) we ought (or, we are bound) more abundantly to give heed to the things that we have heard (*i.e.* the gospel that has been preached to us in the Son), lest at any time (or, lest haply) we let them slip (rather, float past them). The word *παρὰ-βῆναι* (aorist subjunctive from *παράβημι*) denotes flowing or floating past anything. The allusion is to the danger, incidental to those to whom the Epistle was addressed, of failing to recognize the transcendent character of the gospel revelation, missing it through inadvertence, drifting away from it.

Vers. 2, 3.—For if the word that was spoken through angels (*i.e.* the Law) was made (or, proved) steadfast (*i.e.* as explained in the next clause, ratified by just visitation of every transgression and disobedience),

how shall we (Christians) escape, if we neglect so great salvation? The danger of neglect must be in proportion to the dignity of the revelation. The readers are now further reminded of the manner in which the gospel had been made known to them, and been ratified in their own experience, by way of enhancing the danger of disregarding it. Which (not the simple relative pronoun *ἥ*, but *ἥτις*, which denotes always, when so used, some general idea in the antecedent, equivalent to "being such as"), having at the first begun to be spoken through the Lord (opposed to "the word spoken through angels" in the preceding verse. Its beginning was through the Lord himself, *i.e.* Christ the Son, not through intermediate agency. 'Ο *Κύριος* is a special designation of Christ in the New Testament; and, though not in itself proving belief in his divinity, is significant as being constantly used also as a designation of God, and substituted in the LXX. for *κύριος*. It has a special emphasis here as expressing the majesty of Christ), was confirmed (*βεβαιώθη*,

answering to *ἐκείνους βίβαιοις* in the former verse) unto us by them that heard (i.e. by the apostles and others who knew Christ in the flesh). Here the writer ranks himself among those who had not heard Christ himself; his doing which has been considered to afford a presumption against St. Paul having been the writer. For, though not an eye-witness of Christ's ministry, he is in the habit elsewhere of insisting strongly on his having received his "knowledge of the mystery," not from men or through men, but by direct revelation from the ascended Saviour (cf. Gal. i. 1, 12). Still, he does not deny elsewhere that for the facts of Christ's history he was indebted to the testimony of others (cf. 1 Cor. xv. 8, etc.). It was rather the meaning of the mystery that he had learnt from heaven.

Ver. 4.—God also bearing them witness; rather, *God attesting with them*. The word is *συνεμαρτυροῦντες*, a double compound, meaning to attest jointly with others. The idea is that the hearers of "the Lord" testified, and God attested their testimony by the signs that accompanied their ministry. The passage is instructive as expressing the grounds of acceptance of the gospel. Its truth was already "confirmed" to believers by the testimony of unimpeachable witnesses to that which, so attested, carried with it its own evidence. But the signs attending the apostolic ministry were granted for further attestation. Thus "signs and wonders," the craving for which as a condition of belief was so condemned by our Lord, have their true evidential value assigned them. They did not furnish the original basis of belief, which rested on Christ himself, his Person, and his work, as unimpeachably attested. They came in only as suitable accompaniments of a Divine dispensation, and as additional confirmations. The apologists of the last generation were given to rest the evidence of Christianity too exclusively on miracles. The tendency of the present age is to dwell rather on its internal evidence, and, so far as it can be done, to explain away the miracles. They are not to be explained away, having been, as has been said, fitting accompaniments and confirmations of such a dispensation as the gospel was. But to us, as well as to those early believers, they are not the first or main ground of our belief. To us, as to them, Christ and his gospel, testified to as they are by "them that heard," are their own sufficient evidence. Indeed, the cogency of the "signs" in the way of evidence is less now than formerly, since they too have now passed into the category of things that rest on testimony. The evidential counterpart to them in our case is the continued attestation which God gives to

the gospel in its living power on the souls of men, and its results in the world before our eyes. It is thus that our faith is strengthened in "the salvation at first spoken through the Lord, and confirmed to us by them that heard." Four expressions are used for the miraculous accompaniments of the first preaching of the gospel, denoting, apparently, not so much different classes of miracles, as different ways of regarding them. They were (1) signs (*σημεῖα*), attesting the truth of what was preached; (2) wonders (*τίματα*), something out of the common course of things, arresting attention; (3) divers powers (*ταύταις δυνάμεσις*), varying manifestations of a Divine power at work; (4) distributions of the Holy Ghost (*Πνεύματος ἁγίου μερισμοί*), gifts of the Spirit to individual Christians apportioned variously—the last expression having especial reference to the *χαρίσματα* of the apostolic Church, so often alluded to in St. Paul's Epistles. The phrase, with that which follows, according to his own will, is peculiarly Pauline, and confirms the conclusion that the writer, though not necessarily St. Paul himself, was at any rate one of the circle influenced by his teaching.

Ver. 5.—Here the second division of the first section of the argument, according to the summary given above (ch. i. 2), begins. But it is also connected logically with the interposed exhortation, the sequence of thought being as follows: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"—For (as an additional reason) not to angels (but to the Son, as will be seen) did he (God) subject the world to come, whereof we speak. "The world to come (*ἡ οἰκουμένη ἡ μέλλουσα*)" must be understood, in accordance with what has been said above in explanation of "the last of these days" (ch. i. 1), as referring to the age of the Messiah's kingdom foretold in prophecy. The word *μέλλουσα* does not in itself necessarily imply futurity from the writer's standpoint, though, according to what was said above, the complete fulfilment of the prophetic anticipation is to be looked for in the second advent, whatever earnest and foretaste of it there may be already under the gospel dispensation. The word *οἰκουμένη* (*οὗτος γῆν*) is the same as was used (ch. i. 6) in reference to the Son's advent, denoting the sphere of created things over which he should reign. And it is suitably used here with a view to the coming quotation from Ps. viii., in which the primary idea is man's supremacy over the inhabited globe. The whole phrase may be taken to express the same idea as the "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (cf. 2 Pet. iii. 13).

Ver. 6.—But one in a certain place (or,

somewhere) testified, saying. The phrase does not imply uncertainty as to the passage cited. It is one used by Philo when exact reference is not necessary. It is equivalent to "but we do find the following testimony with regard to man." We say to man; for the eighth psalm, from which the citation comes, evidently refers to man generally; not primarily or distinctively to the Messiah. Nor does it appear to have been ranked by the Jews among the Messianic psalms. It would be arbitrary interpretation to assign to it (as some have done) an original meaning of which it contains no signs. This being the case, how are we to explain its application to Christ, which is not confined to this passage, but is found also in 1 Cor. xv. 27? There is no real difficulty. True, the psalm speaks of man only; but it is of man regarded according to the ideal position assigned to him in Gen. i., as God's vicegerent. Man as he now is (says the writer of this Epistle) does not fulfil this ideal; but Christ, the Son of man, and the Exalter of humanity, does. Therefore in him we find the complete fulfilment of the meaning of the psalm. If it be still objected that the application (in which sovereignty over all created things is inferred) transcends the meaning of the psalm, which refers to this earth only—*ἐν τῇ γῇ* in ver. 6. of the psalm being taken in a wider sense than seems justified by the following verses, which confine the application to earthly creatures, it may be replied (1) that the idea of the psalmist is to be gathered, not only from Gen. i. 28, which he quotes, but, further, from the whole purport of Gen. i., of which the psalm is a lyrical expression, including the conception of man having been made in God's image, and invested with a sovereignty little short of Divine; (2) that, if the application does transcend the scope of the psalm, it was open to an inspired writer of the New Testament thus to extend its meaning, as seen in the new light from Christ. Taking the latter view, we have but to put the argument thus, in order to see its force and legitimacy: In Ps. viii. (read in connection with Gen. i., on which it is founded) a position is assigned to man which at present he does not realize; but its whole idea is fulfilled, and more than fulfilled, in Christ. It is to be observed that the original reference of the psalm to man generally is not only evident in itself, but also essential to the writer's argument. For he is now passing from the view set forth in ch. i., of what the Son is in himself, to the further view of his participation in humanity, in order to exalt humanity to the position forfeited through sin; and thus (as has been shown in the foregoing summary) to lead up to the idea of his being our great

High Priest. What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? In the psalm this exclamation comes after a contemplation of the starry heavens, which had impressed the psalmist's mind with a sense of God's transcendent glory. In contrast with this glory, man's insignificance and unworthiness occur to him, as they have similarly occurred to many; but, at the same time, he thought of the high position assigned to man in the account of the creation, on which position he next enlarges. He asks how it can be that man, being what he is now, can be of such high estate. Thus the Epistle carries out truly the idea of the psalm, which is that man's appointed position in the scale of things is beyond what he seems now to realize.

Ver. 7.—Thou madest him a little lower than the angels. Here the LXX. takes *Elohim* (being a plural form) to mean "angels;" as also in Ps. xvii. 7 and cxxxviii. 1. The more correct rendering of the Hebrew may be, "thou madest him a little short of God," with reference to his having been made "in God's image," "after God's likeness," and having dominion over creation given him. But, if so, *Elohim* must be understood in its abstract sense of "Divinity" (so Gesenius), rather than as denoting the Supreme Being. Otherwise, "thyself" would have been the more appropriate expression, the psalm being addressed to God. The argument is not affected by the difference of translation. Indeed, the latter rendering enhances still more the position assigned to man. Thou crownedst him with glory and worship, and didst set him over the works of thy hands. The latter clause of this sentence, which is found in the LXX., but not in the Hebrew, is omitted in several codices. It is not wanted for the purpose of the argument.

Ver. 8.—Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all things in subjection under him, etc. Here the argument from the psalm begins. It is to the following effect: For the subjection of all things, in the Creator's design, to man leaves nothing exempted from his sovereignty. But we do not see man, as he is upon earth now, occupying this implied position of complete sovereignty. Therefore the full idea of the psalm awaits fulfilment. And we Christians find its complete fulfilment in him who, having become a man like us, and is made with us "a little lower than the angels," is now, as man, and for man, "crowned with glory and honour," at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Or we may put it thus: In the present *ἐκουμένη* man is not supreme over "all things" in the sense denoted; but in the *ἐκουμένη* to come "of which we speak," with its far wider

bearings, he is, in the Person of Christ, over "all things" thus supreme. Therefore in Christ alone does man attain his appointed destiny. We may here observe how, even without the enlightenment of Scripture, man's own consciousness reveals to him an ideal of his position in creation which, in his present state, he does not realize. The strange apparent contradiction between man as he is and man as he feels he should be, between experience and conscience, between the facts and the ideal of humanity, has long been patent to philosophers as well as divines.

Ver. 9.—The phrase *βραχύ τι*, where it occurs in this verse with reference to Christ's temporary humiliation, is by many taken to mean "for a little while," on the ground that this meaning suits best the application to Christ, though its most obvious meaning in the psalm (quoted in ver. 7) is, as in the A.V., "a little." The Greek in itself will bear either meaning; and if "a little" be, as it seems to be, the original meaning in the psalm, there is no necessity for supposing a departure from it. All that the writer need be supposed to intimate is that Christ, through his incarnation, took man's position as represented in the psalm. For the suffering of death. So the A.V. renders, connecting the words by punctuation with the clause preceding; the idea being supposed to be that Christ was "made a little lower than the angels" with a view to the "suffering of death;" i.e. because of the "suffering of death" which he had to undergo. But the proper force of *διὰ* with the accusative is better preserved, and a better meaning given to the passage, by connecting *διὰ τὸ πάθος τοῦ θανάτου* with the clause that follows, and translating, But we see him who has been made a little lower than the angels, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour. His crowning was the consequence of his suffering; because of his suffering he was crowned; he won, as man, and in virtue of his human obedience unto death, his position of "glory and honour." Exactly the same idea is found in ch. v. 7, etc., where the purpose and result of Christ's suffering, here anticipated, are more explicitly set forth (cf. also ch. xii. 2). This view, too, suits the drift of the passage before us, which is that human nature has been exalted in the Person of Christ. That he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man. Two questions arise here: (1) As to the meaning of the expression, "that he should taste death," etc.; (2) as to the true reading, as well as the meaning, of the phrase translated "by the grace of God." As to (1), the clause is introduced by *ὅτι*, followed by the subjunctive, *ὅπως γεύεται*: and the con-

struction of the sentence evidently connects it, not with *ἡλαττωμένον*, but with *ἐστεφανωμένον*. It is, "Because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, in order that for [i.e. in behalf of] all he may taste of death." Now, the fact that the actual death was previous to the crowning suggests reference, not so much to it as to its permanent efficacy: and, further, the emphatic words are *ὅτι* *πάντες*, as shown by their position in the sentence; and thus the idea seems to be, "In order that for all his tasting of death may be availing." And he may even be regarded as still tasting of death after his crowning, in the sense of knowing its taste through his human experience, and so perfectly sympathizing with mortal man (cf. ch. v. 15, and below in this chapter, ver. 14, 15). It is a further question whether *πάντες* should be here taken as masculine, as in the A.V., or, like the preceding *πάντα*, as neuter, in the sense of "all creation." The latter rendering seems in itself more natural, though "all mankind" must be conceived as the main idea in the writer's view. At the same time, it is to be remembered how the redemption is elsewhere spoken of as availing for creation generally, for the restitution of universal harmony (cf. Rom. viii. 19, etc.; Eph. i. 10, 20, etc.). A further reason for understanding *πάντες* in the wider sense will appear in our examination of the phrase next to be considered. (2) As to the reading *χάριτι Θεοῦ*. It is found in all existing manuscripts except in one ncial of the tenth century (Codex Uffenbach, cited as M), in a scholium to Codex 67, and in a codex of the Peschito. But, on the other hand, Origen, an earlier authority than any manuscript, speaks of the prevalent reading in his time being *χρηστὶ Θεοῦ*, *χάριτι* being found only in some copies (*ἐν τισὶν ἀντιγράφοις*). Theodoret, Theodorus of Mopsuestia, and the Nestorians also read *χρηστὶ*: and the Latin Fathers, Ambrose, Fulgentius, and others, have *abeque* as its equivalent. Jerome also speaks of the reading *abeque*, but as occurring only "in quibusdam exemplaribus"—thus reversing in his day what Origen had said two centuries earlier as to the comparative prevalence of the two readings. The charge made by Marius Mercator, Theophylact, and Ecumenius against the Nestorians, that they had introduced the reading *χρηστὶ* in support of their own views, is evidently untenable, since the testimony of Origen proves its prevalence long before the Nestorian controversy. It is, on the other hand, very probable that the use made of this reading by the Nestorians was a cause of the other being clung to by the orthodox, and being retained almost exclusively in the existing codices. And this probability greatly

weakens the force of the evidence of the manuscripts as to the original reading. That both were very early ones is evident; but that *χωρίς* was the original one is probable for two reasons: (1) that Origen testifies to its prevalence in his early day, and accepts it as at least equally probable with the other; and (2) that transcribers were more likely to change the unusual and somewhat difficult *χωρίς* into the familiar and easy *χωρὶς* than *vice versa*. Theodorus of Mopsuestia thus accounts for the reading *χωρὶς*, which he rejects very decidedly. He says that some persons, not observing the sequence of the passage, had laughably changed the true reading, because they did not understand it, into one that seemed easy to them. If *χωρὶς* be the true reading, the meaning is plain enough; it expresses the view, often reiterated by St. Paul, of the whole work of redemption being "of grace." The objection to it, on internal grounds, is that the introduction of this view here seems flat and purposeless, as Theodorus of Mopsuestia forcibly contends in his argument against the reading. *Χωρίς*, then, being adopted, the question remains whether to connect *χωρίς* Θεοῦ (as Theodorus of Mopsuestia does, and as the Nestorians must have done) with *γενέσθαι* θανάτου, or with *ἐν τῷ πατρὶ*. If taken with the former, its purpose must be to exclude the Godhead in Christ from participation in the taste of death. Some further explain by reference to the cry from the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But such reference does not suit the view above taken of the intended meaning of *ἐπὶ γενέσθαι* θανάτου. Taken with *ἐν τῷ πατρὶ* (as is rather suggested by the arrangement of the sentence, in which this is the emphatic phrase), it gives the meaning, "that for all except God he may taste of death"—this parenthetical exception of the Divine Being himself being similar to that which St. Paul sees reason for inserting in his application of the same psalm to Christ: *Δὴλον ἐστὶ δεῖν τοῦ θανάτου αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα* (1 Cor. xv. 27). So Origen takes it: *Εἰ τε δὲ "χωρίς Θεοῦ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ ἐγενέσθαι θανάτου," οὐ μόνον ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἀπέθανεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ τῶν λογικῶν λογικῶν*. Also Theodoret: *"Τριπλῶς ἀνάγνωσται τὸ σωτήριον ἐπέμεινε πάθος, χωρὶς Θεοῦ μόνον γὰρ ἢ θεῶν φέρεται τῆς ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ θανάτου ἀνθρώπου. The latter Father explains the wide sense in which it follows that *ἐν τῷ πατρὶ* must be understood by referring to what St. Paul says (Rom. viii. 21) of creation itself being delivered from the bondage of corruption through Christ, and to the rejoicing of angels in the salvation of man.*

Ver. 10.—For it became him, for whom (*διὰ* with accusative) are all things, and

through whom (*διὰ* with genitive) are all things (i.e. God), in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. This refers to what was said in the preceding verse, of Christ having been crowned with glory on account of his suffering of death, and of his tasting death for all. That he should attain through human suffering even unto death to his own perfected state of glory, as being the Leader of human sons whom the one Father of all would bring to glory, was a design worthy of him for whom and through whom are all things—suitable to what we conceive of him and of his way of working. The word *ἐπερσε* is used in the same sense not unfrequently in the LXX. It is probably used here with some view to "the offence of the cross," which might still linger in the minds of some of the Hebrew Christians. In the argument that follows, supported still by reference to Old Testament anticipations, the writer not only meets possible objections lingering in the Hebrew mind, but also carries on and completes the view of the Son which it is his purpose to inculcate, leading up (as aforesaid) to the final position of his being the High Priest of humanity.

Ver. 11.—For both he that sanctifieth (i.e. Christ, the ἀρχηγός) and they that are sanctified (i.e. the "many sons" who are brought unto glory) are all of one (*ἐξ ἑνός*, i.e. of God). The idea expressed here by the verb ἀγιάζω, to sanctify, may be determined by comparison with ch. ix. 13, 14; x. 14, 29; and xiii. 12 (*ὅσα ἀγιάσθη διὰ τοῦ ἱεροῦ αἵματος τὸν λαόν*); cf. John xvii. 9. It is not the idea, to us most familiar, of moral sanctification through the Holy Spirit, but that of the redeemed being brought into a new relation to God, hallowed for "glory," through redemption; whence all Christians are called ἀγίοι. Ἀγιάζω is the equivalent in the LXX. of the Hebrew *קָדַשׁ*, which is applied to the hallowing of both the sacrifices and the people to God's service. As an atoning sacrifice, Christ thus hallowed himself (John xvii. 19), that thus he might hallow the "many sons." *Ἐξ ἑνός* must certainly be taken as referring to God, not (as some take it) to Abraham or Adam. For the necessity of the Son taking part of flesh and blood in order to accomplish the redemption is not introduced till ver. 14. So far the common fatherhood spoken of has been that of him "for whom are all things and by whom are all things," who, "in bringing many sons to glory," has perfected "the Captain of their salvation." The idea is that it was meet that the Captain should be perfected through human sufferings, since both he and the "many sons" are of one Divine Father; in their relation of sonship

(with whatever difference of manner and degree) they are associated together. Be it observed, however, that it is not the *original* relation to God of the "Sanctifier" and the "sanctified," but their relation to him in the redemption, that is denoted by *ἐξ ἑσῶς*. The common sonship does not consist in this, that he is Son by eternal generation and they by creation. It has been seen above that the term *υἱός* is not applied to Christ in this Epistle with reference to his eternal Being, but to his incarnation; and the human "sons" are not regarded as such till made so by redemption. *Ὁ ἀγαπῶν*, and *ὁ ἀγαπῶμεν* rule the sense of *ἐξ ἑσῶς*. The view is that the one Father sent the Son into the world to be the Firstborn of many sons. The expression, frequent in the Pentateuch, "I am he that sanctifieth," may be cited in illustration of the meaning of the passage. For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren; i.e. in the Messianic utterances of the Old Testament, to which, in accordance with the plan and purpose of the Epistle, reference is again made for proof. The point of the quotations that follow (vers. 12, 13) is that the Messiah, notwithstanding the position above the angels, shown above to be assigned to him, is represented also as associating himself with men as brethren, in dependence on one heavenly Father.

Ver. 12.—I will declare thy Name unto my brethren, in the midst of the Church (or, congregation) will I sing praise unto thee. This first citation is from Ps. xxii. 22, quoted, it would seem, from memory or from a text of the LXX. different from ours, *ἀγγελοῖς* being changed to *ἀδελφοῖς*, but with no difference of meaning. The psalm is attributed by tradition to David, being entitled "a psalm of David." Delitzsch and Ebrard accept it as certainly his, concluding, from its position in the first book of the psalms (i.—lxxii.), that it was included in the collection made by David himself (cf. 2 Chron. xxiii. 18 with Ps. lxxii. 20). Others, as recently Perowne, think that the fact of the suffering and humiliation described, being beyond any experienced by David himself, points to some other unknown author. The conclusion, however, does not necessarily follow. David, writing "in Spirit," when under persecution by Saul, may be conceived as drawing a picture, with regard both to present humiliation and to expected triumph, beyond the facts of his own case, taking his own experience as typical of a higher fulfilment. And the minute details of the suffering described, answering so remarkably to the circumstances of the Crucifixion, certainly suggest the idea of a distinct prophetic vision. Still, there is no reason for concluding that the psalm

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was not, like other Messianic psalms, suggested by and founded on the writer's own circumstances and experience. Delitzsch says well, "The way of sorrows by which David mounted to his earthly throne was a type of that *Via Dolorosa* by which Jesus, the Son of David, passed before ascending to the right hand of the Father." There is no psalm of which the ultimate Messianic reference is to Christian believers more undoubted. The first words of it were uttered by Jesus himself from the cross (Matt. xxvii. 46); and for its fulfilment in him, recognized by the evangelists, see Matt. xxvii. 89, 43; John xix. 23, 28. The general purport of the psalm is as follows: A persecuted sufferer, under a feeling of being forsaken by God, pours out his complaint, and prays for succour; suddenly, at the end of ver. 21, the tone of the psalm changes into one of confident anticipation of deliverance and triumph, when the psalmist shall praise the Lord in the congregation of his brethren, when all that fear the Lord shall join him in praise, when the "ends of the earth" shall turn to the Lord, and "all the families of the nations" shall worship with Israel. The close agreement of the latter part of the psalm with the Messianic anticipations of prophecy is obvious, and would in itself determine its Messianic import. The marked difference between this psalm and those previously quoted is that the typical psalmist appears here as a human sufferer previously to his triumph, thus anticipating the similar view of the Messiah in prophecy, as notably in Isa. liii. And hence this psalm is suitably quoted here as a striking and early anticipation of a Messiah "perfected through sufferings," and associated in sympathy with human "brethren," the verse actually quoted, in which "he is not ashamed to call them brethren," being sufficient to remind the readers of the whole of this aspect of Messianic prophecy.

Ver. 13.—And again, I will put my trust in him. There are two passages of the Old Testament from which this may be a citation—2 Sam. xxii. 3 and Isa. viii. 17. In either case the original is slightly altered in the citation, probably with a purpose; the emphatic *ἐγώ* being prefixed, and *ἐσθμαι* being (suitably after this addition) placed before instead of after *πιστεύω*. The purpose of this change may be to bring into prominence the thought that the Messiah himself, in his humanity, puts his trust in God as well as the "brethren" with whom he associates himself. The passage in 2 Sam. xxii. 3 is from the psalm of David, written "in the day when the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul." It is given also in the Book of Psalms as Ps.

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xviii., where the LXX. reads *ἐπεὶ ἐν' αὐτῷ* instead of *πεποιθὼς ἱσταμαι ἐν' αὐτῷ*: so that, if the quotation is from the psalm, it is taken from the historical book. But is the quotation from the psalm or from Isaiah? If from the former, it serves (if Pa. xxii. is also David's) to complete the type of the same royal sufferer, showing him reliant on God along with his brethren in the day of success, as well as during previous trial. Most commentators, however, suppose the quotation to be from Isaiah, inasmuch as the following one is from him, not only coming immediately after the first in the original, but also dependent on it for its meaning. Nor is the introduction of the second quotation by *καὶ πάλιν* conclusive against its being the continuation of the same original passage, since it introduces a new idea, to which attention may be thus drawn. Possibly the writer, familiar as he was with the Old Testament, had both passages in his view, the phrase common to both serving as a connecting link between David and Isaiah. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. The applicability of the whole passage in Isaiah (viii. 17, 18) to the writer's argument is not at first sight obvious. It occurs in connection with the memorable message to Ahaz, on the occasion of the confederacy of Rezin and Pekah against Judah, in the course of which the prophet foretells (vii. 14) the birth of Immanuel. In ch. viii. and ix. he expands this message, rising into a vein of undoubted Messianic prophecy (see especially Isa. ix. 1-8). In the midst of general dismay and disbelief the prophet stands firm and undaunted, presenting himself as a sign as well as a messenger of the salvation which he foretells: "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts." The "children" thus associated with himself as signs appear to have been his two sons, with their symbolical names, Shear-jashub and Maher-shalal-hash-baz, the first of whom he had been commanded to take with him (vii. 3) on his first visit to Ahaz, and the second of whom (viii. 3) had been borne to him by the "prophetess," and named under a Divine command. His own name also may be regarded in the "sign" as symbolical, meaning "Jehovah's salvation." If, then, the words of vers. 17, 18 are quoted as those of the prophet himself (and they are certainly his own in our Hebrew text), he is viewed as himself a sign, in the sense of type, of the Immanuel to come. And the point of the quotation is that, to complete such typical sign, it was required that "the children God had given him" should be combined with him in the representation. They represent the

ἀδελφοί, the *ἀγαθούμενοι*, as Isaiah does the *υἱοί*, the *ἀγαδ(ων)*, all being together *ἐξ ἐνός*. If it be objected that the children given to Isaiah were his own offspring, and not "brethren," as in the antitype, it may be replied that it is not the human paternity of the "children," but their having been given by God to the prophet to be "signs" along with him, that is the prominent idea in the original passage, and that, thus viewed, the words of Isaiah have their close counterpart in those of our Lord; "The men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me" (John xvii. 6, 9, 11, 12). Such, then, may be the ground for assigning the utterance to Christ, justified by the Messianic character of Old Testament prophecy in general, according to which "the historic sense of the utterance does not exclude the purpose of prophecy; but leaves typical references open which declare themselves historically by some corresponding Messianic fact, and hence are recognized afterwards from the point of view of historic fulfilment" (Meyer). But when we refer to the LXX. (which in the passage before us varies greatly from the Hebrew) we find a further reason. The LXX. has (Isa. viii. 16, 17, 18) "Then shall be manifest those that seal the Law that one should not learn it. And he will say (*καὶ ἐπεὶ*), I will wait upon God, who has turned away his face from the house of Israel, and I will put my trust in him. Lo I and the children which God hath given me." Here, in the absence of any preceding nominative in the singular to be the subject of *ἐπεὶ*, the writer of the Epistle may have understood the Messiah to be the speaker; and the Seventy also may have so intended the expression. The general drift of the passage, as interpreted in the Epistle, remains the same, though the LXX. more distinctly suggests and justifies its application to Christ. The only difference is that, according to the Hebrew, the prophet speaks and is regarded as a type; according to the LXX., the Antitype himself is introduced as speaking, and declaring the type of Isaiah to be fulfilled in himself.

Vers. 14, 15.—Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of (literally, *have been made partakers of*; i.e. so made as to share alike), blood and flesh (this is the order of the words, as in Eph. vi. 12, according to the great preponderance of authority; Delitzsch sees in it a reference to "the blood-shedding for the sake of which the Saviour entered into the fellowship of bodily life with us"), he also himself likewise (rather, in like manner; i.e. with "the children") took part in the same; that through death he might destroy (*καταργήσῃ*, equivalent to "bring to nought," "render impotent as

though not existing;" the word is frequent with St. Paul) him that had (or, *has*) the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver (*i.e.* from bondage) all those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Here the purpose of the Incarnation is set forth as requiring the complete association of the Son with human brethren to which prophecy had pointed. But more is now declared than the prophecies so far quoted have implied; and thus is introduced (by way of anticipation, as is usual in the Epistle) the doctrine of atonement, which is to be dwelt on afterwards. For the object of Christ's becoming one of us is now further said to be that by *dying* he might effect *redemption*. The "children" in ver. 14 are the *τμήματα* of the type in Isaiah, fulfilled in the "many sons" to be "sanctified" and brought to glory. (We may observe, by the way, the difference between the words used of their participation in human nature and of Christ's—*κεκοινωνε* and *μετέτεχε*: the aorist in the latter case expresses his sharing what was not his before, and so distinctly implies his pre-existence.) For understanding the account here given of the purpose of the Incarnation, we must remember that *death*, originally announced (Gen. ii. 17) as the penalty of transgression, is regarded in the New Testament (notably by St. Paul) as the sign of the continual dominion of sin over the human race. Thus in Rom. v. 12, 15 the mere fact that all men "from Adam to Moses" had died is adduced as sufficient proof that all were under condemnation as sinners. Whatever further idea is implied in the word "death"—such as alienation from God in whom is life eternal, or any "blackness of darkness" thereupon ensuing in the world beyond the grave—of man's subjection or liability to all this his natural death is regarded as the sign. It is to be remembered, too, that "the devil," through whom it was that sin first entered, and death through sin, is revealed to us generally as the representative of evil (*ὁ πονηρὸς*), and, as such, the primal manslayer (*ἀνθρωποκτόνος ἀπ' ἀρχῆς*), with power given him over death, the penalty of sin, as long as man remains in his dominion, unredeemed. Till redemption cast a new light upon the gloom of death, man was all his life long in fear of it; its shadow was upon him from his birth; it loomed over before him as a passing into darkness, unrelieved by hope. We know well how the hopeless dismalness of death was a commonplace with the classical poets, and how, even now, the natural man shrinks from it as the last great evil. But Christ, human, yet sinless, died for all mankind, and, so dying, wrested from the devil his power over death, and emancipated be-

lievers from their state of "bondage" (as to which, see below). On particular expressions in this passage we may remark: (1) That, "having the power of death," which has been variously interpreted, may be taken in the usual sense of *εχειν κρᾶτος τινος*, viz. "having power, or dominion, *over*." Satan has had the dominion over death allowed him because of human sin. And it may be observed that elsewhere, not only death, but other woes that flesh is heir to—its precursors and harbingers—are attributed to Satanic agency (cf. John i. 12; ii. 6; Luke xiii. 16; 1 Cor. v. 5). (2) Christ is not here said to have as yet abolished death itself; only to have rendered impotent him that had the power of it; for natural death still "reigns," though to believers it has no "sting." In the end (according to 1 Cor. xv. 26; Rev. xx. 14; xxi. 4) death itself will be destroyed. In one passage, indeed, it is spoken of by St. Paul as already abolished (*καταργήσατος μὲν τὸν θάνατον*, 2 Tim. i. 10); but this is in the way of anticipation: death is already vanquished and disarmed to believers. (3) The bondage (*δουλεία*) spoken of is the condition of unredeemed man, often so designated by St. Paul. See Rom. vii. and viii., where man's bondage (felt when conscience is awake) to "the law of sin in the members," and his emancipation from it through faith, are described; and especially viii. 15, 16, 17 ("For ye have not received the spirit of *bondage* again to fear," etc.), as elucidating this passage. (4) The word *ἐντοχος*, followed by the genitive (*δουλείας*), expresses here more than "liability to;" it implies present implication, equivalent to "in hold to." The A.V., "subject to," expresses the idea adequately.

Vers. 16, 17.—For verily, etc. The A.V. (following the ancient interpreters) takes this verse as referring to the Incarnation. But (1) *ἐπιλαμβάνεσθαι σπέρματος*, and, still more, *ἐπιλαμβάνεσθαι ἀγγέλου*, seems an awkward way of expressing "to assume the nature of." The usual sense of the verb, followed by a genitive, is "to take hold of," as *ἐπιλαμβάνεσθαι χειρὸς* (Acts xxiii. 19; Mark viii. 23); and especially in the sense of "succouring" (cf. Matt. xiv. 31; ch. viii. 9; Isa. xxxi. 32, *Ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐπιλάβομαι τοὺς χεῖρας αὐτῶν*; and Eccles. iv. 11, *Ἡ σοφία ἐπιλαμβάνεται τῶν ζητούντων αὐτήν*). (2) The present tense of the verb is inappropriate to the past act of the Incarnation, which has, moreover, been sufficiently declared in ver. 14. (3) The sequence of thought in the following verse is not easily intelligible if the Incarnation be the subject of this: "Whence it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren;"—this does not follow from his having become incarnate; we should

rather say that his incarnation was the means of his being made like them. Translate, therefore, observing the position of the substantives before the verbs, For not, I ween, angels doth he lay hold of (*to succour them*), but the seed of Abraham he doth lay hold of. The allusion is to its being the human "children of promise," and not angels, that are denoted in prophecy as being, and acknowledged to be, the object of the Messianic redemption. The expression, "the seed of Abraham," is, of course, not intended to exclude the Gentiles: it is appropriately used in reference to the Messianic promises of the Old Testament (cf. Gen. xxiii. 18; Isa. xli. 8): and the extension of its meaning to "all them that believe" would be as familiar to the first readers of the Epistle as to us (cf. Matt. iii. 9; John viii. 39; Rom. iv. 11, 16). The conclusion of ver. 17 (which repeats virtually what has been alleged before, after reason given) now naturally follows: Whence it behoved him in all things to be assimilated to his brethren; *i.e.* to the race which was the object of his redemptive succour. But, further, why the need of this entire assimi-

lation, to the extent of participation in suffering unto death? That he might become a merciful (or, *compassionate*) high priest, in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. It was that he might be fully constituted as the High Priest of humanity. Here, according to the manner of the Epistle, the view of priesthood, to be afterwards set forth at length, is briefly hinted. It is taken up in ch. v., after the conclusion that Christ is man's High Priest has been reached by another line of argument (see preceding summary). In ch. v. one of the essentials of a true high priest (whose office is to mediate for man in things pertaining to God) is set forth as being that he should be of the same race and nature with those for whom he mediates, and able in all respects to sympathize with them: and this view is here foreshadowed.

Ver. 18.—Such power of sympathy Christ, by undergoing human suffering and temptation, acquired. For in that (or, *wherein*) he hath suffered himself being tempted (or *having been himself tempted in that wherein he hath suffered*), he is able to succour them that are tempted.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—*A solemn parenthetical warning.* Out of solicitude for the spiritual well-being of his readers, the writer pauses here for a moment, to enforce upon them the necessity of holding fast the New Testament salvation. He does so in words which are burning with urgency.

I. THE DUTY. How prone men are to "neglect the great salvation" (ver. 3)! All classes of *sinners* do so—the blasphemer, the infidel, the self-righteous man, the respectable worldling, the procrastinator. Thousands of church-going people ignore the gospel, out of love of the world and secret repugnance to Christ and his cross. Even *believers* themselves are very prone to "drift away from" (ver. 1) their anchorage in the gospel verities. The early Hebrew Christians were strongly tempted to relapse into Judaism; our besetting danger is that we allow ourselves to glide with the multitude down the swift current of worldliness and indifference. We need, therefore, "to give the more earnest heed." Want of heedfulness on the part of professing believers is a great evil of our time. "My people doth not consider." What a blessing would dawn upon the Church, were all its members to begin to "search the Scriptures," and to make intense application of mind and heart to the spiritual study of saving truth! Only thus will Christian faith both live and grow. Only thus may one's life be a life of real devotion to the Redeemer. Only by discharging this duty of constant watchfulness will a believer be preserved from apostasy.

II. THE MOTIVES BY WHICH IT IS ENFORCED. "Therefore" (ver. 1); *i.e.* on account of all that has been said in the previous chapter. 1. *The greatness of the gospel.* "So great salvation" (ver. 3). What an unfathomable depth of meaning underlies this little word "*so*"! The new revelation far transcends the old, inasmuch as in the Son we have received a visible manifestation of God, an adequate atonement for sin, an intelligible exhibition of the spirituality of religious service, a perfect expression of the dignity of man, and a clear revelation of eternal life. Especially does the new economy excel the old in the distinctness with which it exhibits "salvation" as its characteristic feature. The gospel proclaims the love of God. It offers pardon. It breathes a new life into the soul. It rescues from the despotism of sin. It promises a glorious immortality. And at what an infinite expenditure has this salvation been provided! It cost the incarnation of Christ, together with his obedience, sufferings, and death. It costs still

the pleadings and strivings of the Spirit. 2. *The dignity of its first Preacher.* "At the first spoken through the Lord" (ver. 3). In ch. i. the writer has unfolded and illustrated from Scripture the glory of Christ. He is greater than the prophets of the Old Testament, and more eminent than the angels, by whose ministrations the Sinaitic Law had been proclaimed. He is the Son of God—his visible manifestation and his exact counterpart. He made and sustains and possesses the universe. He is not only the Prophet of the Church; he is its atoning Priest and its exalted King. And this first Preacher continues with the Church as its perennial Prophet. He speaks to us to-day and always by his Word and Spirit. 3. *The attestations which it has received.* (Vers. 3, 4.) The Church has the testimony of the apostles and early evangelists to the facts and doctrines of the gospel. These were even sealed from heaven by the miracles of Christ and his apostles, as well as by gifts from the fulness of the Spirit distributed among the early Christians. But we have now far greater witness than these. The highest evidence of the truth is the truth itself. The history of the Church has been an ever-cumulating attestation of Christianity. Myriads of believers have certified the gospel by their experience of its power within their hearts. It has been attested from millions of death-beds. "We are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." 4. *The inevitable doom of those who neglect it.* (Vers. 2, 3.) If the Law, given by angels, could not be violated with impunity, how much more certain and dreadful must be the ruin of all who reject the message of mercy spoken by the lips of the Lord himself (ch. x. 28—31)! Escape for such is plainly impossible. For did not man's redemption cost the tears and groans and blood of the Redeemer? Had these not been indispensably necessary, they would not have been expended. And what can any despiser of them propose to put in their place? Let professing Christians remember that they will miss salvation if they merely neglect it. As the farmer will lose his harvest by simple neglect, as the business man will become bankrupt by simple neglect, as the scholar will strip himself of his attainments by simple neglect, so the surest way by which to accomplish the irremediable ruin of the soul is just to "neglect so great salvation."

In conclusion, these four motives to heedfulness are the very strongest that can be urged. The Three Persons of the Trinity all speak to us in them. They remind us at once of the unutterable love of God, and of the power of his anger. They appeal to the most sacred interests of our souls. If we are not aroused by these motives, even God himself can do no more for us.

Vers. 5—9.—*The royalty of man.* The apostle, in beginning to touch upon the humiliation and death of Christ, shows that these arrangements brought him no dishonour. God had subordinated the new dispensation, not to angels, but to man (ver. 5); and human nature, restored in Christ to its imperial dignity, is destined to ultimate exaltation above angelic nature.

I. *MAN'S NATIVE SOVEREIGNTY.* The writer cites, in illustration of this, the testimony of Ps. viii. (vers. 6—8). Here we have: 1. *Man's lofty nature.* (Ver. 7.) Humanity had a splendid origin. Though clothed meanwhile in a mortal body, our nature did not crawl up to its present position from primeval "sentient slime;" it belonged from the beginning to the same order of being as God its Maker. The first man was not a savage. He wore the crown of reason and conscience and moral freedom. In his spiritual and immortal nature he was made in the image of God. God was "mindful of him," and "visited him." 2. *His kingly prerogative.* "And didst set him over the works of thy hands" (ver. 7). In bestowing upon man this illustrious kinship with himself, God placed in his hand the sceptre of authority over all the creatures. The world was made that he might be its master, and rule over it as God's viceroy. 3. *His universal dominion.* "Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet" (ver. 8). Not the inferior animals only, as Ps. viii. might lead us to conclude; but, as we learn here, as well as from 1 Cor. xv. 27, the entire visible and invisible universe. Even the world of angels is by-and-by through Christ to be subordinated to man. It is only "for a little while" that man is to remain "lower" than they.

II. *HIS FAILURE TO REALIZE HIS SOVEREIGNTY.* "But now we see not yet all things subjected to him" (ver. 8). 1. *His nature is debased.* Man's course in the world has not been one of continuous upward development. So far from that, it has been a course

of deterioration from the golden age of his original maturity. "The crown is fallen from our head." Man used his freedom to destroy his innocence. His spiritual nature is in ruins. He is the slave of his own evil passions. He feels far away from God, and he has lost all fellowship with him. 2. *His authority is resisted.* So soon as Adam rebelled against God, nature began to renounce allegiance to him. Having lost his purity, he forfeited the lordship which had been his birthright. Since the Fall, man has not been able to master even the material world. Uncivilized nations live in ignorance of many of the simplest physical laws; and the most advanced rather wrestle with the forces of nature than command them. 3. *His power is partial.* How impotent man is in presence of earthquake and tempest! Frost and snow are mightier than he. Wild beasts defy him. Insect hordes destroy his harvests. Disease and death triumph over him. Man cannot rule his own spirit; and as for dominion over the spiritual world beyond himself, he is unable to see how such a thing can be possible at all.

III. *HIS RE-CORONATION IN CHRIST.* (Ver. 9.) The apostle's comment upon David's words fills them with new light and glory, by showing how their fulfilment centres in Jesus. He has become the focus of man's destined royalty. 1. *The life of Jesus exhibits the Divine ideal of man.* We understand what is meant by our creation in God's image when we "behold" him. He has lifted our crown from the dust, and set it upon his own head. Think of his life of spotless purity and holy familiarity with God during the years in which he continued "a little lower than the angels." He was, while on earth, the Second Adam—the Son of man—the Type of imperial manhood. While in the world he exercised dominion over the creatures; and at length he was exalted to God's right hand, where our faith now sees him. 2. *His death gives man power to reach up to that ideal.* Jesus voluntarily submitted to his humiliation and sufferings and death that he might put away the sin which has robbed man of crown and sceptre. In tasting death he drank up the curse. His sacrifice has vindicated the righteousness and justice of God, and his blood has power to renew and sanctify the human soul. So, those who become united to him in his death are delivered from the thralldom of sin, and participate with him in his kingdom (Rev. i. 5, 6). 3. *His glory is the pledge of man's restored dominion.* The last clause of ver. 9 reminds us that seeing Jesus has himself triumphed over death, the benefits of his death have become, by virtue of his exaltation, available for all. His people, being one with him, shall partake of all the "glory and honour" with which, as the God-Man, he has been "crowned." Man's restoration to imperial power is already being foreshadowed on earth, in the increasing triumphs of science and art among Christian nations, and in the gradual victory of what is moral and spiritual over brute force and evil passion. And in heaven the saints shall reign with Christ. They shall stand nearer the throne than the seraphim. They "shall judge angels." The whole of Christ's vast empire shall be theirs (1 Cor. iii. 21—23).

In conclusion, let us : 1. Cherish the scriptural idea of man's dignity. 2. Remember that we can realize our destiny only in Christ. 3. Seek a saving interest in his atoning death. 4. Consecrate soul and life to his service. 5. Imitate him as the pattern Man. 6. Live in a manner befitting the great hope which we have in him.

Ver. 10.—*The necessity of Christ's sufferings.* The Saviour's sufferings, while he was on earth, were : 1. *Numerous.* They covered his whole life, and culminated in his "tasting death." 2. *Various.* He suffered in body and mind and heart, and at the hands of earth and hell and heaven. But his severest sorrows were spiritual—"the travail of his soul." 3. *Unparalleled.* His were the substitutionary sufferings of a perfectly holy human nature in most intimate identity with God. 4. *Divinely inflicted.* It is implied here that "it pleased the Lord to bruise him." The humiliation of Christ, so far from being incompatible with his headship, was indispensable in order thereto. He required to suffer—

I. *THAT HE MIGHT VINDICATE THE GLORY OF THE DIVINE CHARACTER.* The glory of God himself is the ultimate reason, as his will is the law, of all things. "It became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things;" i.e. the moral character of God rendered it needful that Jesus should taste death, if sinful man was to be saved. The necessity of the atonement did not arise only from the exigencies of God's moral government. It was not effected merely that its power might soften the

sinner's heart into repentance. Rather, it was demanded by the perfections and character of God himself. The sufferings of Christ "became" God's justice, which could not connive at our guilt; his truth, which necessitated the infliction of the threatened punishment; his holiness, which could have no pleasure in the friendship of degraded sinners; his mercy, which yearned for our salvation. Not only so, but the sufferings of Christ, in rendering the salvation of sinners consistent with God's character, have at the same time been the means of gloriously illustrating the Divine attributes, of revealing them in their beautiful harmony (Pa. lxxxv. 10, 11), and thus of covering them with new splendour to the view of an admiring universe.

II. THAT HE MIGHT OBTAIN HIS OWN GLORY AS MEDIATOR. Christ, "the Author of our salvation," was "made perfect through sufferings;" i.e. it was through his "obedience unto death" that he became fully qualified for his work as Saviour, and was exalted to heaven for its accomplishment. He must needs suffer for the honour of God and for the good of man, before he could put on the lustrous robes of his mediatorial majesty. His glory is the recompense which his Father has given him for his sufferings. Only after making satisfaction on the cross for human sin could Jesus ascend to that immeasurable height of supreme authority upon which, as the God-Man, he now sits enthroned.

III. THAT HE MIGHT ACCOMPLISH THE GLORY OF GOD'S REDEEMED CHILDREN. It was the purpose of God to "bring many sons unto glory." He desired to raise our fallen humanity from the dust, and crown it anew "with glory and honour." But this could only be effected through Christ as the "Author of salvation." It is through him alone that a sinner, estranged from God, can be made spiritually a "son" of God, and exchange his career of guilt and enmity for that life of grace which shall at length be consummated in glory. The sufferings of Christ were necessary in order to the pacification of the human conscience, the restoration of man's sonship, and the recovery of his eternal inheritance. And they shall be effectual for these ends. Christ, God's Servant, "shall justify many;" he shall bring to glory such multitudes of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, as to entitle him to be called with fullest emphasis the Saviour of men and the Redeemer of the world.

Vers. 11—18.—*Jesus our Brother.* Here the writer expands the statement of ver. 10, and confirms it by suitable arguments. This closing paragraph of the first section of the Epistle emphasizes the fact that Jesus, the Son of God and the King of angels (ch. i.), is also as Mediator our brother Man.

I. THE BROTHERHOOD OF CHRIST. First, stated abstractly (ver. 11). Next, illustrated from Old Testament Scripture (vers. 12, 13), the Messianic passages quoted being Pa. xxii. 22; Pa. xviii. 2; Isa. viii. 18. Then, verified from the facts and events of the Saviour's earthly life (vers. 14—18). This endearing brotherhood is: 1. *A brotherhood of nature.* "All of one" (ver. 11); of one nature, of one race, of one Father. He "partook of flesh and blood" (ver. 14); i.e. he became man. He took his place as one of "the children" by being born. He had a human body, subject, like ours, to pleasure and pain, to hunger and thirst, to suffering and death. And he had a human soul, which thought and felt, loved and hated, was joyful and sad, and which acknowledged its dependence upon the Father of spirits. 2. *A brotherhood of condition.* "In like manner" (ver. 14); i.e. in a manner almost similar. Jesus had no nimbus round his head, such as the painters give him. God sent him "in the likeness of sinful flesh;" for, though his human nature was perfectly pure, it was exposed to those infirmities and sufferings which in all other sons of Adam result from sin. 3. *A brotherhood of experience.* "It behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren" (ver. 17). So he actually passed through a complete course of pain and trial and temptation, which ended only with his death. He travelled over the entire range, and fathomed all the depths, of human suffering. "He himself hath suffered, being tempted" (ver. 18). He went through every human experience of poverty, toil, pain, disappointment, insult, persecution; through every sorrow which arises in a pure mind from constant contact with sinners; and through every form of Satanic temptation. 4. *A brotherhood of love.* "Not of angels doth he take hold" (ver. 16), to help and save them: then what a wonder of grace it is that he became the Redeemer of mortal man! It was from love to us that he "partook" so readily of "flesh and

blood," that by this means he might raise humanity to a higher pinnacle of glory than any on which the loftiest angel can set foot. It is because of this love "beyond a brother's" that even now he does not disdain "to call us brethren" (ver. 11).

II. THE PURPOSES ACCOMPLISHED BY CHRIST'S BROTHERHOOD. Some expressions in the passage state these generally. (1) "He taketh hold of the seed of Abraham" (ver. 16), to pluck them from sin and Satan. (2) "That he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest" (ver. 17): here we meet this famous title of Christ, "High Priest," for the first time—a title which strikes the key-note of the Epistle, and which is not given to him in any other book of the New Testament. (3) "He that sanctifieth" (ver. 11). Christ became incarnate that he might consecrate his people by delivering them from sin. Or, more in detail, he became our brother: 1. *To expiate sins.* (Ver. 17.) By his death in our nature he has offered to God a perfect satisfaction for the sin of the world. The perfection of his sacrifice is due to the fact that he who suffered is the same glorious personage who is described in ch. i. as the Son of God, the eternal Jehovah, the Creator and Possessor of the universe. 2. *To deliver from death and Satan.* (Vers. 14, 15.) "The sting of death is sin;" but death is powerless to harm the new life of those who are cleansed with the atoning blood. Sin was introduced at first by the devil, and death through sin, and so death is associated with the devil's usurpation; but Jesus has "bruised the serpent's head," rendering him impotent in relation to "the children" who are to be brought to glory. They are emancipated by their elder Brother from death's power and fear. 3. *To enable him to sympathize with his people.* (Vers. 17, 18.) He passed, as our Brother-Man, through every variety of trial and sorrow, that we may learn to have confidence in him, as being fully able to sustain and cheer us amid the darkest experiences of affliction (ch. iv. 15, 16). 4. *To "bring many sons unto glory."* (Ver. 10.) Jesus is our Moses and Joshua. He became our Brother that he might be our Leader through the wilderness of this world up to the heavenly Canaan. Had he not "partaken of flesh and blood," there would have been no inheritance for us. "The humanization of God is the divinization of man."

LESSONS. 1. The native value of human nature, as seen in the fact that Christ has assumed it, to redeem it. 2. "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable Gift." 3. How great the madness of the man who rejects Christ's offered brotherhood! 4. The necessity of union with Christ by faith, if we would have him claim us as his brethren. 5. The comfort of knowing, in our days of trouble, that the God-Man cherishes for us the love of a brother. 6. The duty of loving our brethren in Christ (ch. xiii. 1).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1-4.—*The superior privileges of Christians.* "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to," etc. The "therefore" connects this chapter with the preceding. Because the Son of God is immeasurably greater than the angels, "we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard," etc. Our text presents to us a view of the superior privileges and the more solemn responsibilities of Christians as compared with those who lived in the earlier dispensation. We shall confine our attention at present to the former portion of the subject, which we may state thus—*The privileges of this Christian dispensation are much superior to those of the Mosaic economy.*

I. THE EARLIER REVELATION WAS MADE BY ANGELS, THE LATER BY THE LORD. The Law was a "word spoken by angels." The Law came from God, but it was given to Moses by the mediation and ministry of angels. They were present and assisted at the giving of the Law on Sinai. The testimony of Scripture upon this point is conclusive (see Deut. xxxiii. 2; Ps. lxxviii. 17; Acts vii. 53; Gal. iii. 19). And Josephus says, "Our best maxims and most excellent laws we have learned of God by means of angels." And Philo: "There were present at the giving of the Law, visible sounds, animated and splendid, flames of fire, spirits, trumpets, and Divine men running hither and thither." But the revelation of the gospel was by the Son of God—"having at the first been spoken by the Lord." "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Inasmuch as the Son is higher than the angels, inasmuch as the revelation of the gospel higher than that of the Law.

II. THE EARLIER REVELATION WAS CONFIRMED BY SUPERNATURAL AND TERRIBLE SIGNS, THE LATER BY MORE NUMEROUS AND GRACIOUS SUPERNATURAL SIGNS. Very awful and alarming were the extraordinary phenomena at the giving of the Law. "The mount burned with fire," etc. (ch. xii. 18—21). "And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke," etc. (Exod. xix. 18). But the gospel revelation is more abundantly and more convincingly confirmed. "God also bearing witness, both with signs and wonders," etc. (ver. 4). The miraculous confirmations of the Christian revelation were: 1. *More numerous* than those of the revelation of the Law. The Saviour's public ministry was marked by an almost unbroken series of miraculous works. 2. *More marvellous*. To raise the dead to life again with a word is far more wonderful than all the fire and smoke, the thunderings and trumpetings and tremblings of Sinai. 3. *More various*. The miracles of Sinai seem to have been limited to the phenomena and forces of nature. But those which were wrought by our Lord and his apostles related to nature's forces, to nature's products, to diseases of the body, to diseases of the mind, to evil spirits, to life and death. 4. *More beneficent*. At the giving of the Law the miracles were amazing and alarming, and fitted to impress and awe an uncultivated people. But the miracles associated with the promulgation of the gospel, while even more amazing, were also gracious and helpful, beneficent and rich in blessing, and fitted, not to terrify, but to attract and exalt and purify. As confirmed by these superior signs, the gospel revelation is higher than that of the Law.

III. THE EARLIER REVELATION WAS IN THE LETTER, THE LATER WAS IN A LIFE. The Sinaitic Law was written; but the revelation made by the Lord was not merely in word, but in tone and accent, in gesture and expression of countenance, in involuntary influence and voluntary action. The greatest revelations are never verbal, but always vital. The deepest emotions cannot be expressed in any words. The highest truth far transcends the utterance of the loftiest eloquence of the tongue or the pen; it can be expressed only as it is lived. Thus "the greatest truth of the gospel is Christ himself—a human body become the organ of the Divine nature, and revealing, under the conditions of an earthly life, the glory of God." And when even his life in the human body could not adequately express the riches of the grace of God, he laid down his life, and perfected his revelation, by voluntarily dying, "the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." And now "God commendeth his own love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

IV. THE EARLIER REVELATION WAS OF LAW ONLY, THE LATER IS OF A "GREAT SALVATION." "The word spoken through angels" consisted chiefly of commands and prohibitions; it expressed the authoritative "Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not;" and it promised to the obedient life and prosperity, to the disobedient punishment and death. But ours is a revelation of grace. The gospel does not abrogate moral law; it rather insists upon its sacred authority, its great comprehensiveness, its intense spirituality, and its pure benevolence. We have law still, but it is law steeped in love. The gospel is also a revelation of forgiveness of sin for the penitent, of a new life for the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and of inspiration and power for those who desire help to serve God; in a word, it is the free offer of a "great salvation." Let us briefly contemplate this "great salvation." It is: 1. *Salvation from great evils*. We have gazed upon the crumbling ruins of what was once a spacious and massive castle, or upon the venerable remnants of some ancient temple, and while we have pictured to ourselves the scenes of which they had been the theatre in olden days, a feeling of mournfulness has stolen over us. We have thought of the brave doings connected with the old castle—hunting, fighting, feasting, singing, dancing, love-making—all gone. We have thought of the earnest and eloquent pleadings of the servant of God in the temple, of the waves of music from pealing organ and living voices, of the devout, yearning, sorrowing, rejoicing hearts of worshippers, now all gone. Nought but ruins remain. How mournful and oppressive! These are faint pictures of the calamities which have befallen our nature through sin. The original dignity and glory, heroism and harmony, purity and peace of human nature have been lost by sin. And by sin it has become subject to guilt and fear, shame and suffering, death and dread of measureless woes hereafter. But most terrible of all is sin itself. The sinfulness, the degradation, and prostitution of our powers and our being,—these are our greatest curse. Can this fallen temple be rebuilt? etc. Is there a salvation great enough to deliver from these dread evils? Yes; "so

great salvation" is this. 2. *Salvation by great Agents and means.* Not by angels or by men, but by "God manifest in the flesh." "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself;" "What the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son," etc. (Rom. viii. 3, 4). The "strong Son of God" is the great Saviour of men. Then think of the distinguished means which he employed in effecting salvation. His marvellous incarnation, his simple and sublime teaching, his holy and beautiful life, his sacrificial sufferings and death, etc. "Ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things," etc. And in bringing this salvation near to men's hearts another great Agent is employed, even the Holy Spirit (see John xv. 26, 27; xvi. 7-15). 3. *Salvation to great glory.* This salvation raises man to a more glorious condition than was his before he ruined himself by sin. It saves from the lowest degradation to the highest perfection. It rescues from hell and introduces to heaven. It includes pardon, peace, purity, perpetual progress, fellowship with God, etc. 4. *Salvation of a great multitude.* "Many shall come from the east and west," etc. (Matt. viii. 11). Our Lord will bring "many sons unto glory." "In my Father's house are many mansions;" "I saw, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number," etc. (Rev. vii. 9, 10). "So great salvation." How immeasurably greater, then, are our privileges than those of the men who lived under the Mosaic economy!—W. J.

Vers. 1-4.—*The more solemn responsibilities of Christians.* "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed," etc. As a necessary sequel to our former homily on these verses, let us now consider—

I. THAT THEY TO WHOM ARE OFFERED THE GREATER PRIVILEGES OF THIS CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION ARE UNDER GREATER OBLIGATIONS THAN THEY OF THE EARLIER DISPENSATION WERE. In human relations as well as in the Divine government this principle is generally acknowledged and acted upon, that "unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more." This principle underlies the reasoning of our text. Our greater privileges bring us under greater responsibilities in this way. 1. *The more amply verified revelation has the more imperative claim on our belief.* The more convincing the evidence by which a truth is supported, the more binding is the obligation to believe that truth. To doubt the truth of that which bears the manifest seal of God is to rebel against the Divine claims upon our credence. 2. *The more gracious revelation has the greater claim upon our loving acceptance.* The gospel appeals not only to the reason and conscience, as the Law did, but also to the heart. It is fitted to inspire us with gratitude; it would enkindle our affections; it would secure our willing obedience by first eliciting our hearty trust in God. And this involves an increase of our obligations. 3. *That our responsibilities are measured by our privileges is an immutable principle of the Divine government.* "That servant which knew his lord's will," etc. (Luke xii. 47, 48); "A man that hath set at nought Moses' Law," etc. (ch. x. 28, 29); "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh," etc. (ch. xii. 25). Very great are our advantages, equally great are our responsibilities.

II. THAT IF THESE GREATER PRIVILEGES, WITH THEIR CORRESPONDING OBLIGATIONS, ARE DISREGARDED BY US, A TERRIBLE RETRIBUTION WILL OVERTAKE US. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" 1. *We may neglect this salvation.* Though it is provided for us, offered to us freely, and we are entreated to accept it, yet we may neglect it. (1) The fact of our moral agency shows this. (2) The method of God's dealing with us shows it. He respects our moral freedom. He invites, entreats, reasons with, warns, and draws us; but he does not force or compel us. (3) The hypothesis of the text also shows this. The "lest" (ver. 1) shows that we may "be diverted from" (Alford), or "drift away from" (Revised Version), "the things which we have heard." The "if" (ver. 3) shows that we may "neglect so great salvation." 2. *Should we neglect this salvation, nothing can avert from us a terrible retribution.* "How shall we escape?" etc. A forcible way of expressing the impossibility of escape. Under the Law "spoken through angels" retribution was certain—"every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward." How much more certain is it under the gospel! The far superior dignity of him through whom it was first spoken attests with greater force the reliability of its retributions. The increased

evidence by which it is confirmed witnesses to the increased certainty of the punishment of those who neglect it. The very grace which has provided and which offers the "great salvation" renders the punishment of those who reject it more certain and inexpressibly more terrible. Their punishment is more certain, for their guilt is greater; for the same reason it will be more terrible also. It will be punishment from One who in infinite love has done everything which he could do to save us. It will be "the wrath of the Lamb." How, then, "shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation"? Can your temporal resources open up a way for your escape? Can your own arm save you? "Hast thou an arm like God?" Can education, or science, or philosophy save you? There is but one Saviour from sin, even Jesus. Accepting him, we shall be saved with "so great salvation." Neglecting him and his salvation, we shall be lost. You need not toil to secure your ruin. Neglect alone is sufficient to bring you under the most terrible condemnation and punishment. Disregard the offered salvation, and all the dread consequences of sin will fall upon you with pitiless and inflexible severity. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard," etc.—W. J.

Vers. 5—9.—*The Divine destiny for man.* "For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection," etc. The writer now resumes the subject of the exaltation of the Son of God over the holy angels. He proceeds to show that in that human nature in which he suffered death, he is raised to supreme glory and authority, and that man also is exalted in and through him. Notice—

I. THE DESTINY FOR WHICH MAN WAS CREATED. In certain aspects of his being man seems to be an insignificant creature, and to occupy a comparatively mean position in the universe. The psalmist, who is quoted in the text, refers to this: "When I consider thy heavens, . . . what is man?" etc. The word translated "man" denotes the weakness and frailty of our nature; and the words translated "son of man" point to man as "formed of the dust of the ground." Yet there are aspects in which man is great; and the destiny for which God created him is a glorious one. That destiny is briefly indicated in this quotation from Pa. viii. 8. It consists in: 1. *A high place in the Divine regard.* As evidence of this we have a twofold fact. (1) God graciously thinks of man. "Thou art mindful of him;" "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil." God's care of man, which is manifested in the provision which he has made for him, witnesses to his thought of him. What significance it gives to our life when we reflect that the Infinite thinks upon us and cares for us! How the fact tends to exalt our nature! What a consolation and inspiration it should be to us! "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me." (2) God graciously visits man. "Thou visitest him." The word used indicates a kindly visitation, as of "a physician visiting the sick." His visitation preserveth our spirits. His visits bring light and refreshment and joy. "His going forth is prepared as the morning, and he shall come unto us as the rain," etc. His visits are redemptive. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people." 2. *An exalted rank in creation.* "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels." We have already called attention to the distinguished rank of angels in the universe.¹ Man is only a little lower than they. "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him." Man's nature is *intellectual*. He can reason, reflect, etc. It is *spiritual*. The body is the vesture of that which comes from God and returns to him. "There is a spirit in man," etc. It is *moral*. He can understand and feel the heinousness of the morally wrong, the majesty of the morally right. Conscience speaks within him. It is *religious*. He can love, admire, and adore. It is *capable of endless progress*. If man attains unto his Divine destiny he will for ever have to say, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Truly, "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels;" "a little less than Divine." 3. *A position of kingly majesty and authority in this world.* (1) Here is regal majesty. "Thou crownedst him with glory and honour." The figure of coronation is intended to set forth the royal majesty which was conferred upon man, as of a kingly crown. Amongst creatures in this world he is royal in his faculties and capacities, and in his position. (2) Here is regal authority. "Thou didst put all

¹ On ch. i. 4, 5.

things in subjection under his feet," etc. The psalmist in the original passage amplifies this "all things:" "All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field," etc. There is a reference to Gen. i. 26—28, "Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea," etc. In this world man is God's vicegerent. He was made by his Creator to exercise dominion over all things and all creatures here.

II. THE FAILURE OF MAN TO REALIZE HIS TRUE DESTINY. "But now we see not yet all things put under him." It is unmistakably clear that at present man's sovereignty in the world is not complete. The sceptre has slipped from his grasp. His dominion is contested. He has to contend against the creatures that were put in subjection unto him. The forces of nature sometimes scorn his authority and defy his power. Man has not now complete rule over his own being. His passions are sometimes insurgent against his principles. His senses are not always subordinate to his spirit. His appetites war against his aspirations. Sin has disrowned man. He has lost his purity, therefore has he lost his power. In his present condition he is far from realizing his glorious destiny.

III. THE DIVINE MEANS FOR ENABLING MAN TO REALIZE HIS DESTINY. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels," etc. 1. *The Son of God has taken upon himself human nature.* "We behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus." "Who being in the form of God, deemed not his equality with God a thing to grasp at, but emptied himself, taking upon him the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men." As man was "made a little lower than the angels," so, in becoming man, our Lord also was "made a little lower than the angels." 2. *In his human nature he endured death.* "That he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (1) The death of Jesus was voluntary. In his case death was not inevitable. He was not forced to die. "I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me," etc.; "The Son of man came . . . to give his life a ransom for many;" "Christ Jesus gave himself a ransom for all." The voluntariness was essential to the influence of his death as an atonement and as an inspiration. (2) The death of Jesus was for the benefit of man. "Taste death for every man." In this place "for" (*ὑπὲρ*) does not mean "instead of," but "on behalf of." Alford well says, "Where this ordinary meaning of *ὑπὲρ* suffices, that of vicariousness must not be introduced. Sometimes, as e.g. 2 Cor. v. 15, it is necessary. But here clearly not, the whole argument proceeding, not on the vicariousness of Christ's sacrifice, but on the benefits which we derive from his personal suffering for us in humanity; not on his substitution for us, but on his community with us." He died for "every man." The benefits of his death, its inspiring and redeeming power, are available "for every man"—for the poorest, the obscurest, the wickedest, etc. (3) The death of Jesus for man is to be ascribed to the kindness of God. "That he by the grace of God should taste," etc. Our salvation is to be ascribed to the unmerited kindness and love of God towards us. "The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation unto all men." "When the kindness of God our Saviour, and his love toward man, appeared, not by works done in righteousness," etc.; "God commendeth his own love toward us," etc. 3. *On account of his endurance of death he has been raised to supreme glory and authority.* "Because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour." His exaltation to this might and majesty is in consequence of his voluntary humiliation and suffering and death. "He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him," etc. This was necessary to the perfection of his redemptive work. "On the triumphant issue of his sufferings their efficacy depends." 4. *He has been exalted to this supreme position as the Head of humanity.* Not the angelic but the human nature has God raised to the throne. "For not unto the angels did he subject the world to come, whereof we speak." This Christian economy, this new world of redemption by the grace of God in Christ Jesus, in all its developments, is placed under our Lord. In our humanity, and as our Head and Forerunner, he is enthroned the King in the new realm of Divine grace. Humanity is crowned in him. Through him alone can we realize our glorious destiny. We must: (1) *Believe in him.* Our text intimates this. "We behold him . . . even Jesus." This "behold" does not express an indifferent, uninterested sight of him; but the earnest look of faith, the believing contemplation of him. By faith we become one with him. (2) *Imitate him.* The sacrifice of the cross leads to the splendour of the crown.

The true sovereignty is reached only by the way of service. "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him."—W. J.

Ver. 10.—*Perfection through suffering.* "For it became him, for whom are all things," etc.

I. THE PERFECTION OF THE REDEEMER WAS ATTAINED THROUGH SUFFERING. "Perfect through suffering." The perfection here spoken of does not refer to his character as Son of God, but as Mediator—"the Captain of our salvation." "The perfecting of Christ was the bringing him to that glory which was his proposed and destined end." Made "perfect through suffering" is similar in meaning to "because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour." Only through suffering could he enter upon his mediatorial glory. Two thoughts are suggested. 1. *Before he could attain unto his mediatorial glory his character and work as Redeemer must be complete.* 2. *Suffering was essential to the completeness of his character and work as Redeemer.* He must suffer in order that he might (1) sympathize with his suffering people (ver. 18); (2) present a perfect example to his suffering people (1 Pet. ii. 21—24); (3) reconcile sinners to God. The exhibition of infinite love—love that gives up life itself, and that for enemies—was necessary to remove the alienation of man's heart from God, and to enkindle love to him in its stead. And the exhibition of perfect obedience—obedience even unto death—was necessary to establish and honour in this world the Law of God which man had broken. So our Saviour was perfected through suffering; he passed through sharpest trials to sublimest triumphs.

II. THIS MODE OF REACHING PERFECTION CONSISTS WITH THE CHARACTER OF THE GREAT GOD AND FATHER. "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things," etc. God the Father is here represented as: 1. *The great First Cause of all things.* "By whom are all things." He is the Source and Origin of the entire universe. 2. *The great Final Cause of all things.* "For whom are all things." All things in the universe are for his glory. Creation, providence, redemption, are all designed and all tend to promote the glory of the great Father. The words under consideration are sometimes used of the Saviour, and they are true of him; but they are even more applicable to God "the Father, who sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." "For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen." 3. *The great Author and Designer of salvation, with its agents, means, and methods.* Our Lord is spoken of in the text as the "Captain [Revised Version, 'Author'] of salvation." But, traced to its source and origin, salvation takes us up to the eternal Father. And "it became him" that he should so order the agencies and methods of salvation that the Saviour should be perfected through suffering. Such an arrangement was not fatalistic or arbitrary, but suited to the object in view, the means being adapted to the end, and in thorough harmony with the character and perfections of God—his wisdom, righteousness, and love. The Hebrew Christians, whom the writer is addressing, felt the offence of the cross. There were times when in some measure "Christ crucified" was still "a stumbling-block" to them, or at least they were in danger of this. And so the writer argues that the attainment of the crown by the endurance of the cross was an arrangement worthy of God, and therefore the fulfilment of this arrangement could not be unworthy of the Saviour. We have said that the means were adapted to the end; the perfection could not have been attained without the sufferings. But, more, the sufferings were in complete conformity to the being and character of God. He is not a cold, impassive Beholder of human sin and misery. He suffers by reason of man's sin and woe (cf. Isa. lxiii. 9; Hos. xi. 8). Christ in his sufferings reveals to our race how God had felt towards us in all preceding ages.

III. THIS MODE OF REACHING PERFECTION IS EXEMPLARY FOR ALL TRUE CHRISTIANS. 1. *The exalted relation of true Christians.* They are "sons" of God, not simply because he is "the Father of their spirits," but also by adoption (cf. Rom. viii. 14—17; 1 John iii. 1—3). 2. *The vast number of true Christians.* "Many sons unto glory." There have been ages when the number of the true and good has been comparatively small. But, as the result of Christ's mediation, the saved will be so many that no human arithmetic can count them, no human mind grasp the glorious total. Many things encourage this belief; e.g. (1) the inexhaustible provisions of Divine grace in Jesus Christ; (2) the immense numbers of the race who die in infancy, and through

the Saviour are received into glory; (3) the prevalence of true religion throughout the world, which is being rapidly accomplished, and the triumph of Divine grace over human sin, which may be continued for many long ages before the end of this dispensation;—these and other things encourage the belief that our Lord will lead to glory an overwhelming majority of our race. 3. *The inspiring relation which our Lord sustains to true Christians.* He is “the Captain [Revised Version, ‘Author’] of their salvation.” The word in this place certainly has a deeper significance than “captain” or leader. Salvation originated in the heart of God, but it was accomplished by Christ. He redeemed us unto God by his blood; and now he inspires and empowers and leads us onward to complete victory. 4. *The illustrious destiny to which he leads true Christians.* “Unto glory.” This is the crowning result of their salvation. They shall be sharers in the blessedness and majesty of God to the fullest extent of which they are capable (cf. John xvii. 22—24; Rev. iii. 21). 5. *The pathway by which he leads them to their destiny.* Like himself, they also must be made “perfect through sufferings.” “If we endure, we shall also reign with him” (cf. 1 Pet. v. 10, 11). Wherefore, let us not be afraid of suffering. Only let us be sure that we suffer with our Saviour and in his spirit; so shall we ultimately share his bliss and glory.—W. J.

Vers. 11, 12.—*The oneness of the Sanctifier and the sanctified.* “For both he that sanctifieth and they who are,” etc.

I. THE ONENESS OF OUR LORD WITH MAN. “Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.” 1. *Our Lord is of one nature with man.* This is what many take to be the meaning of the writer in this place. The Saviour was truly human. As a man, he hungered and thirsted, ate and drank, was wearied and slept, sorrowed and wept, suffered and died. His humanity was a real thing. 2. But *unity of spiritual relation* seems to be set forth here. The text certainly points to something higher than the mere physical oneness of Christ with all men. It is not his relation to all men that is here expressed, but his relation as Sanctifier to all who are being sanctified through him. It is this union of spiritual relationship which is here meant. The Sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one God and Father. They “are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus;” they “have received the Spirit of adoption,” etc. Our Lord not only stooped down to our nature, but he lifts our nature into fellowship and oneness with God. Thus the Sanctifier and they who are being sanctified are all of one “God, the spiritual Father as of Christ, so also of those who are descended from Christ” (cf. John xx. 17).

II. THE WORK OF OUR LORD FOR MAN. He is here represented as the Sanctifier of his people. The word used in the text suggests the ideas of: 1. *Expiation.* It does not seem to us that we are warranted in making this interpretation exclusive of others (as M. Stuart does, who translates “both he who maketh expiation and they for whom expiation is made”). But *ἁγιάζω* may point to the atoning death of Christ. “While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son.” “God reconciled us to himself through Christ.” Sanctification is impossible apart from reconciliation to God, and that reconciliation is effected by means of the death of Christ. “We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ” (ch. x. 10). 2. *Consecration.* They who are sanctified have consecrated themselves to God. They are devoted to him; they do not live with common aims or for common ends; but at all times, and even in commonest duties, they live for God and for his glory. They have presented themselves “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God,” etc. 3. *Transformation.* “They who are sanctified;” literally, “they who are being sanctified,” are being made true and right in word and deed, in thought and feeling. They are not sinless or perfect. Their sanctification is not yet complete, but it is in progress. They are being transformed into the image of their Lord and Saviour. But how can our Lord be said to be the Sanctifier? The Holy Spirit is the great Agent in the transforming process; but the expiation or atonement was made by Christ. And while consecration, or dedication to God, is the act of the Christian, the mighty impulse from which that act springs comes from the Christ. And in the transforming work Christ sends “the sanctifying Spirit; he is the Head of all sanctifying influences. The Spirit sanctifieth as the Spirit of Christ.”

III. THE CONDESCENSION OF OUR LORD TOWARDS MAN. “For which cause he is not

ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy Name unto my brethren," etc. Though he is "Lord of men as well as angels," he calls his people his brethren. Notwithstanding the lowliness of their condition and the crudeness and imperfection of their character, he graciously acknowledges them as his brethren (cf. Matt. xxviii. 10; John xx. 17).

CONCLUSION. 1. *Here is encouragement to address our Lord in our times of need.*

"Though now ascended up on high,
He bends on earth a Brother's eye;"

and he has a brother's heart towards us. 2. *Here is reason why we should confess him as our Lord and Saviour.* Since he acknowledges us as his brethren, let us humbly and heartily acknowledge him as our Saviour and Sovereign. 3. *Here is reason for acknowledging the lowliest Christian as our brother.* Shall we refuse to recognize as our spiritual kindred those whom our Lord calls his brethren? 4. *Here is incitement to the cultivation of holiness.* Since Christ is engaged in our sanctification, "let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit," etc. (2 Cor. vii. 1).—W. J.

Vers. 14, 15.—*The incarnation of the Son of God.* "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers," etc.

I. THE GREAT FACT OF THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same." These words suggest: 1. *The reality of our Lord's human nature.* He partook of our flesh and blood. His body was real, and not merely phenomenal. His physical experiences—e.g. weariness, hunger, thirst, pain, death—were real, not pretended. His human soul also, with its sympathies and antipathies, was genuine. 2. *A peculiarity of our Lord's human nature.* His human nature was voluntarily assumed. He partook of flesh and blood. We could not apply these words to Moses or to St. Paul without manifest absurdity. We had no choice as to whether we should be or not be, or what we should be; whether we should exist at all, or, if we were to exist, what form of existence should be ours. But he had. We were brought into this world without our will; he "came into the world" of his own will. "He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant." This implies: (1) His existence before his incarnation. "His goings forth were from of old, from everlasting." (2) His power over his own existence. He could take upon himself what form of existence he pleased. He had power over his life. He had "power to lay it down, and power to take it again." (3) His deep interest in human existence. "He was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor," etc.

II. THE GRAND DESIGN OF THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD. "That through death he might bring to nought him that," etc. 1. *Our Lord became man in order that he might die.* All other men die because they are human, and their death is unavoidable; but he assumed our nature for the express purpose of acquiring the capability of death. His death was of stupendous importance. He looked forward to it; he preannounced it to his disciples; he deliberately advanced to it; he voluntarily endured it. 2. *Our Lord died in order that he might vanquish death.* "That through death he might bring to nought him that had," etc. He does this (1) By the abolition of Satan's power over death. Satan may be said to have the power of death, inasmuch as: (a) Death, as we know it, is the result of sin, and he introduced sin into our world, and is actively engaged in propagating it. "The sting of death is sin." But for sin, it might have been "a gentle waiting to immortal life." (b) He kindles the passions which lead on to death; e.g. anger and revenge, which often result in murder; lust of territory, which often causes war, etc. (c) He inspires the mind with terror in the anticipation of death. The gloomy and dreadful ideas which are frequently associated with death are probably suggested by him. Our Lord died to render this power of Satan ineffective, and in this respect to bring him to nought. How his death effects this we will inquire shortly. (2) By the emancipation of man from the thralldom of the dread of death. Men recoil in alarm from death for several reasons; e.g.: (a) The supposed anguish of dying. A good Christian who was drawing near to the river of death said, "I have no doubt of going to heaven; but oh, the crossing, the crossing!" (b) The painful separations which death causes. Tennyson truly expresses the feeling of many in this respect—

"For this alone on Death I wreak
The wrath that garners in my heart;
He puts our lives so far apart
We cannot hear each other speak."

(c) The appalling mystery as to what lies beyond death—

"The dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns."

(d) The solemn judgment to which it leads. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that, judgment." The dread of death, for these and other reasons, holds men in bondage, enslaves them; they cannot shake it off. Our Lord died to set them free from this thralldom. But how does his death effect this? He was "manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." As an atonement for sin, his death removes the guilt of all who heartily believe on him. Death is no longer penal to them. For them "the sting of death" is taken away. Again, since Christ died and rose again from the dead, death wears a new aspect to the Christian. It is no longer the end of our existence, but an onward and upward step in our existence. It means not repression, but development; not loss, but gain; not the way to darkness and misery, but to light and joy. Death to the Christian is no longer "the king of terrors," but the kind servant of the Lord and Giver of life.

"Death is the crown of life:
Were death denied, poor man would live in vain;
Were death denied, to live would not be life;
Were death denied, even fools would wish to die.
Death wounds to cure; we fall, we rise, we reign!
Spring from our fetters; fasten in the skies,
Where blooming Eden withers in our sight.
Death gives us more than was in Eden lost.
This king of terrors is the prince of peace."

(Young.)

Thus, by his own voluntary death, the Son of God brings to nought Satan's power of death, and sets free the captives of the dread of death. Death itself remains, but its character and aspect to the Christian are completely changed. The evil of death is vanquished, and transformed into blessing. "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."—W. J.

Ver. 16.—*The reasons why Christ redeemed men rather than angels.* "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels," etc. The rendering of the Revised Version gives the true meaning: "For verily not of angels doth he take hold, but he taketh hold of the seed of Abraham." The text starts a very grave inquiry. Why did Christ come to the help of lost men in preference to that of lost angels? Seeing that both were fallen, both were in a state of sin and misery, and neither were able to save themselves, nor had any claim upon his pity and power, why did the Divine Being determine to raise and restore lost men, while leaving lost angels in darkness and ruin? First we will endeavour to answer this inquiry *negatively*.

I. NOT BECAUSE THAT, WHILE MEN NEEDED HELP, ANGELS DID NOT NEED IT. Man needed Divine redemption. A sinner, he needs forgiveness; lost, he needs restoration, etc. The sacred Scriptures, the history of our race, and our personal experience, unite in affirming our need of the saving help of Jesus Christ. The Word of God assures us that there are angels who also need help. It tells of a number of fallen, sinful, suffering angelic beings who are reserved in bondage and darkness until the day of final account (see John viii. 44; 2 Pet. ii. 4; 1 John iii. 8; Jude 6; Rev. xx. 10). Their need is as great as man's.

II. NOT BECAUSE ANGELS WERE IN ANY WAY INFERIOR TO MEN EITHER IN NATURE OR ABILITY. To us it would have seemed probable that, if only one of the two races of sinners was to be saved, the preference would have been given to the greater of the two. Regarding the matter from our standpoint, the greater and more glorious a

being is the more worthy is he of redemption, and the treasures of wisdom and love expended in his redemption will lead to richer results. It was not on this principle that God, in his Son, came to the help of men and not to that of angels. In being and capacity we believe that angels are greater than men. In our remarks on the preceding chapter¹ we endeavoured to show that angels are the highest orders of created beings. And the fall of angels did not strip them of their power. And since angels are greater than men, it follows that their fall must have been greater. Their immense powers being perverted render them mightier for mischief than beings of inferior powers could be. Hence how great was their need of help! And if restored to their original condition, would not their restoration bring greater glory to their Restorer than the restoration of beings who are lower in the scale of being?

III. NOT BECAUSE ANGELS, IF LEFT WITHOUT HELP, WOULD SUFFER LESS THAN MEN WOULD HAVE DONE IF THEY HAD BEEN SO LEFT. The greatest sufferings are not those of the body, but those of the mind and heart. And the measure of suffering endured by any one is regulated by his mental and moral capacity. Therefore, if our estimate of angelic capacity be correct, being left without redemption the sufferings of angels will be greater than man's would have been if he had been so left. Their vast powers must be terrible instruments of self-torture. Their remembrance of the irrevocable past must also augment their misery. Their recollection of their lost heritage must greatly increase the anguish which afflicts them. But we have no such memories. Only two of our race experienced the joys of that Eden from which sin has exiled us. We know not the peace and bliss of the human heart in its original state. Hence we conclude that the sufferings of angels are greater than those of men would have been if they had been left without the saving help of God.

IV. NOT BECAUSE OF AN ARBITRARY SOVEREIGNTY ON THE PART OF GOD. The sovereignty of God is the sovereignty of infinite wisdom and love. To say that he chose to restore mankind and to leave angels to their dread doom *because* of his sovereignty is unsatisfactory. He made the choice in his sovereignty; but what was the reason for the exercise of his sovereignty in this particular way? He is absolutely independent; but he ever acts from wise and worthy reasons, and never from caprice or for the mere assertion of his sovereignty. We may not be able always to discover the reasons of his decisions and deeds; but there are reasons, and perfect ones, for them all, though we see them not.

Thus far, then, we have met with no good ground why the Deity should have determined to save lost men rather than lost angels. Our examination would have led us to conclude rather, that if one race was to be helped and the other abandoned, the angelic sinners would have been elected to the blessing. Let us now answer the inquiry which is before us *affirmatively*.

I. BECAUSE THE GUILT OF FALLEN ANGELS WAS GREATER THAN THAT OF MAN. We attach much greater guilt to one who commits a crime with little or no temptation, than we do to one who commits the same crime under the influence of powerful temptation. Now, Satan was not tempted to sin by any force without himself. We cannot trace the origin of sin beyond Satan. How inexpressibly guilty must he be who generated the first sinful thought, and that in a universe of light and holiness! But man, in the young days of his innocence, was tempted to sin by a subtle, powerful being. The temptation was presented in a pleasing and persuasive form; it appealed at once to the sense of taste, to the love of beauty, and to the desire for knowledge; and man yielded to it, and fell. But his guilt appears to us to be far less than that of the angels who sinned. Is it not a reasonable conclusion that God marks the degrees of guilt, notes every aggravating or extenuating circumstance, and treats the offender accordingly?

II. BECAUSE EVERY FALLEN ANGEL CONSENTED TO THE TRANSGRESSION BY WHICH THEY FELL, WHILE MAN, THROUGH THE LAWS OF HIS BEING, SUFFERS FROM THE SIN OF THE FIRST TRANSGRESSORS TO WHICH THEY ALONE CONSENTED. The sin of the angels affected only those of their number who were guilty of actual participation therein. But the condition of every man is greatly affected through the sin of the first parents of our race. The way in which men are brought into being differs from that of angels.

¹ See our homily on vers. 4, 5; and on ver. 6.

Generation obtains amongst men, but not amongst angels. We are born with an inclination, a bias, to that which is evil. Were it not for the grace of God, that inclination would be irresistible. If Christ had not come to our help, we must have been utterly ruined by reason of a transgression for which we could not possibly have been in any way responsible. Here, then, we have a very powerful reason why God should provide redemption for man rather than for angels.

III. BECAUSE THE PREFERENCE SHOWN TO MAN FURNISHES A STRIKING ILLUSTRATION OF DIVINE JUSTICE, WHICH EXERCISES A SALUTARY INFLUENCE ON BOTH UNFALLEN ANGELS AND REDEEMED MEN. Had the preference been given to fallen angels it would not have set forth the justice of God. It could not have been just to have provided help for the guiltier race while leaving the less guilty race to perish; or to have redeemed those who individually consented to the rebellion, while resigning to ruin untold millions who took no part in the sin by which their race fell. But in the preference given to fallen man, we have a clear manifestation of the justice of God. The fact that he has left fallen angels to their righteous doom, being known to the unfallen universe, will bind the good more firmly in their allegiance to the Almighty. And a knowledge of the great price with which fallen men were redeemed will so impress the saved with the evil of sin, and the justice of God, and the benevolence of the Divine Law, and the love of the heavenly Father, as to secure their everlasting and ever-growing loyalty to God. Thus even we, with our dim perceptions and feeble reason, can discover wise and worthy reasons for the Divine choice of lost man for redemption rather than of lost angels. "Just and true are all thy ways, thou King of saints;" "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!" etc. (Rom. xi. 33—36). Two inferences of great importance are deducible from our subject. 1. *That the guilt of those who reject the proffered help of Christ is greater than that of fallen angels.* How great soever the guilt of demons may be, they have not incurred that of rejecting the gracious offers of pardon and restoration. But those men who neglect the great salvation must quench the Holy Spirit, harden their hearts against the drawings of the Saviour's love, and the grace of the Divine Father, etc. Of such sin even demons are not guilty. 2. *That the blessedness of those who accept the help of Christ will be greater, in some respects, than that of holy angels.* Angels have many joys, but the joy of redemption they know not; man alone knows that joy; and it appears to us that of all joys it must be the deepest, tenderest, intensest. Let us personally avail ourselves of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.—W. J.

VERS. 17, 18.—*Our great High Priest—his functions and qualifications.* "Wherefore in all things it behoved him," etc.

I. THE FUNCTIONS OF OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST. 1. *To make atonement for man as a sinner.* "A High Priest . . . to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Various are the renderings of this clause. Revised Version, "to make propitiation;" Alford, "to make expiation;" Ebrard, and Stuart also, "to make atonement." Ebrard says, "*ἱλαστικός* comes from *ἵλαος*. . . . *ἵλαος* denotes, not the internal disposition of God towards man, but the actual, positive expression and radiation of that feeling which first becomes again possible towards the redeemed; and *ἱλαστικός* means to make it again possible for God to be *ἵλαος*, i.e. to make a real atonement for real guilt." Whence arises this need of atonement? Not because God was indisposed to forgive and save man. It has been well said by Delitzsch, "As the Old Testament nowhere says that sacrifice propitiated God's wrath, lest it should be thought that sacrifice was an act by which, as such, man influenced God to show him grace; so also the New Testament never says that the sacrifice of Christ propitiated God's wrath, lest it may be thought that it was an act anticipatory of God's gracious purpose, which obtained, and, so to speak, forced from God, previously reluctant, without his own concurrence, grace instead of wrath." The death of Jesus Christ for us was the expression of the love of God towards us, and not its procuring cause. Why, then, was the sacrifice of the cross necessary to the forgiveness of our sin and the sanctification of our being? (1) To maintain the majestic authority of God's Law. Obedience to law is an indispensable condition of moral well-being. Man cannot be saved except in harmony with it. The perfect obedience of our Lord, who was "obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross," is the most striking and significant testimony "that the Law

is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." (2) To meet the deep needs of man's spiritual nature. Man needs the removal of his alienation from God. His sins have separated between him and his God. He is alienated and an enemy in his mind by wicked works. And the death of the Only Begotten of the Father was necessary to reconcile him to God. That death was both "a response to the imperious claims of the eternal law of righteousness, and the final appeal of the Divine love to the conscience and affections of the human race." That appeal moves man's heart, and awakens within it love to God. Moreover, man needs the satisfaction of the instinct of right now awakened within him. The truly penitent soul, knowing that sin is rightly followed by suffering, and if persisted in leads to death, and, hating sin in itself, would fain suffer as an atonement for its sins and as a homage to goodness and truth. Such a penitent soul feels that "without shedding of blood there is no remission." The awakened conscience cries out for atonement. Our Lord's death for sin, the voluntary surrender of his life upon the cross for us, meets this deep and urgent need of the religious heart. 2. *To succour man as a sufferer.* Man needs a High Priest who "is able to succour them that are tempted." The word "tempted" is used in two senses in the Bible. (1) Tested, proved, with a good intent, as in the case of Abraham (Gen. xii. 1). St. James also writes of temptations of this kind (Jas. i. 2, 8). (2) Tempted with evil intent, or solicitation to sin. In both these senses man is tempted. He is tried by suffering and sorrow, by physical pain and spiritual conflict. He is also assailed by subtle solicitations to sin. He requires a High Priest who will be able to help him in these trying experiences; one who will give him sympathy in his sorrows, inspire him with patience in his trials, and with spiritual discernment and strength in his temptations to sin. Such are the functions of our great High Priest.

II. THE QUALIFICATIONS OF OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST. 1. *He must share our nature in order that he might make atonement for us as sinners.* The perfect obedience which our Lord rendered to the holy will of God, the painful sufferings which he patiently endured, and the terrible death which he voluntarily submitted to, could not have constituted an atonement for us had he not previously taken upon himself our nature. "Wherefore it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren." It was morally necessary that he should share our nature if he would efficiently serve us as our High Priest. 2. *He must share our trials in order that he might succour us in our sufferings.* Our High Priest must be "merciful," so as to feel compassion for suffering and tempted men. He must be "faithful," so as to elicit and retain the confidence of those whom he represents before God. He must himself suffer temptation, that he may efficiently help the tempted. Both classes of temptation assailed him. He was tempted by Satanic suggestion and argument and inducement. He was tried by severest physical pains, and by spiritual sorrows which grew into the great overwhelming agony. "A Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. . . . Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." Hence he is able to succour them that are tempted. He can not only feel for them, but with them. By his personal experience of our sufferings he has acquired the power of sympathy with us in them. "As God, he knows what is in us; but as man, he feels it also." "Sympathy," says Burke, "may be considered as a sort of substitution, by which we are put into the place of another man, and affected in many respects as he is affected." Thus our great High Priest sympathizes with his tried people. "In all their affliction he is afflicted." He succours as well as sympathizes; he inspires with courage as well as regards with compassion; and in our weakness he makes us strong in himself "and in the power of his might." Having such a High Priest, let us trust him heartily and at all times.—W. J.

Vers. 1—4.—*An exhortation against drifting away from the glorious Son of God.* This passage is evidently a parenthesis, no link in the argument. Like the acknowledged Epistles of Paul, this is characterized by frequent sudden and brief departures from the general outline of thought. Like a river, the outline is clear from beginning to end, but here and there are small side channels into which the stream is swiftly, involuntarily drawn, to rejoin the main current a little lower down. One of these we have before us. The interjection of this passage is very natural. The last chapter

ended with "the heirs of salvation;" the writer has brought his hearers to this point—the grandeur of the salvation they inherit. But, remember, he has one object before him, the confirmation of the Hebrews wavering under the pressure of persecution. He doesn't write merely as a logician, but as an anxious friend; he cannot, therefore, wait to enforce the application of his argument when he reaches the end, but drops the thread of his idea for a moment to break out in an earnest appeal that this great salvation should be cleaved to. 1. *Observe that he is not writing to the ungodly, but to a Christian Church.* However suitable these words as an address to the ungodly, they are here spoken to professing Christians who had taken a bold stand for Christ and the gospel (ch. x. 32—34). 2. *Observe that the literal rendering of the end of the first verse is "lest at any time we drift away."* The words, "from them," italicized in the Revised Version, are misleading. The drifting away that is deprecated is, not "from the things that were heard," but *from Christ.* Subject—*An exhortation against drifting away from the glorious Son of God.*

I. TO DRIFT AWAY FROM CHRIST IS FEARFULLY POSSIBLE. It is so: 1. *Because the soul is not always moored to Christ when it is brought to Christ.* We regard it a doctrine of the New Testament that the true believer cannot be lost, that the salvation which on faith in Christ he receives is for ever, the might of Christ to supply all that is necessary to salvation being the warrant of it. Why, then, are these professing Christians warned against drifting away from Christ? It is possible to be brought to Christ without being anchored to him. A number of influences may lead one close to the Redeemer, between whom and Christ there is, nevertheless, no vital union, and as long as the tide runs that way his safety may not be suspected even by himself, but let the tide turn and his lack of union becomes apparent and he may drift away and be lost. 2. *Because powerful adverse currents tend to carry the soul from the Saviour.* Sometimes the current leads toward Christ. It had been so with these professing Hebrews. But it is not always that way; difficulties occur, winds of temptation blow, the tide of worldly custom runs high, the unseen force of depraved inclination gathers power; and then, however strong the cable, however firmly it may bind shore and ship together, it will creak and strain, and every fibre of it be needed to hold the ship in safety. But what if there be no cable, no vital faith, in that day? Then the soul will inevitably part company with Christ, leaving the harbour where it has lain so long, and be seen (when such a storm shall blow as has never blown on it yet) drifting away. 3. *Because the departure of the soul from Christ may be for some time imperceptible.* Drifting away is a departure silent, gradual, unnoticeable. At sunset the ship is close to shore and all is safe; without a warning it drops into the tide, and swings round, and with no sound but the ripple of the water is carried down the stream to the open sea, and the crew may sleep through it all. So, departure from Christ may be as involuntary and quiet as that; a silent, ceaseless, unconscious creeping back to old habits. There is its danger. Drifting away means leaving Christ without knowing it, till we find ourselves far out at sea, and a tide we cannot resist bearing us still further away. You have seen men who were once close to Christ, but whilst they slept they have unconsciously glided away, and by the current of worldliness been carried into the rapids and whirled along faster and faster, only waking to stare wildly at their helplessness, and close hands and eyes in despair for the final plunge into the eternal gulf.

II. TO DRIFT AWAY FROM CHRIST MUST END IN HOPELESS RUIN. If we drift away "how shall we escape"? 1. *To drift away from Christ is to leave the only Refuge from our sin's consequences.* "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression, . . . how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" The point is, we are condemned already; apart from the great salvation we are in the position of those whose transgressions and disobediences were followed by righteous judgment. But under these circumstances a "great salvation" has been provided. "Great," indeed! A full and everlasting remission of all sin, the enjoyment of God's fatherly favour, the transformation of our moral nature, a tranquil conscience, a bright and glorious hope for eternity; and all this free to whosoever will accept it. Now, if man is under condemnation apart from this, what must he be if, this having been secured and offered to him, he ignores and neglects it? To suffer ourselves to drift away from Christ is to add to the madness of leaving the only haven of security, the guilt of

refusing that grace which would have saved us had we let it. 2. *To drift away from Christ is to disregard the supreme dignity of him who offers the salvation to us.* "So great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord." The point is the dignity of him who brings the salvation to us. Angels were employed in the ministrations of the old dispensation; "The Law was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator." But he who has brought the word in these last days is God the Son. He has spoken it by being it; and then by uttering it—uttering it to our hearts by his Spirit. The overtures of salvation are not made by man to God, but by God to man; it is not the condemned rebel that appeals to the offended Sovereign for salvation, but the offended Sovereign appealing to the rebel. What a spectacle—God, as it were, on his knees before men, beseeching them to be saved! "As though God did beseech you," etc. See how that adds to man's guilt, and the certainty of his ruin if he drifts away from Christ. 3. *To drift away from Christ is to close our eyes wilfully to the urgency of his claims.* "Which, having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto," etc. (vers. 3, 4). The abundant proof they had received as to the divinity of this Word of salvation is the point here. Man has received the utmost evidence of the truth of the gospel. What he has seen of its results in the lives and characters of others is, of itself, overwhelming assurance that it is of God; and when he hears it preached he knows it is from above, he knows its worth, he knows its claim. Think of what it is to leave Christ after that; to depart from him, though you know the right he has to you, and the blessings he wants to impart; to be lost, not in the dark, but in the light! The apostle gathers up these arguments against leaving Christ, in this earnest appeal to reason and conscience: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" There is no answer to that. "Friend, how camest thou in hither without a wedding garment? And he was speechless."

III. *TO DRIFT AWAY FROM CHRIST IS PREVENTED BY EARNEST HEED TO HIS WORD.* "We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away." Faith is the cable which alone can moor us to Christ; but the Word of God has a vital bearing on faith; therefore, where the Scriptures are neglected, there is the utmost peril of drifting away. 1. *Only by earnest heed to Divine truth can you discover whether, in your soul, faith exists.* You think it does, but you may be deceived; then search here for the fruits and evidences of faith; then see if they exist in your heart and life. If you would know whether you have faith, you must bring yourself to the test this Book affords. 2. *Only by earnest heed to Divine truth can you create faith where it does not exist.* "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." To make light of this Book is to remain faithless. 3. *Only by earnest heed to Divine truth can faith be maintained where it does exist.* How does Christ maintain faith in the soul, but by the means he has appointed? He gives grace through the means of grace. To neglect the means, therefore, is to lose the grace. Scripture declares the Divine Word to be the means employed for our sanctification. Faith is the cable that holds the soul to the Redeemer. The Word creates and maintains the faith. "Therefore we ought to give," etc. "Drift away!" Away from Christ, the only Haven; drift away into the wild, wintry, shoreless sea of doom—drifted away by the currents of worldliness and care. We drift away silently and imperceptibly; are you sure you are securely moored to the Rock of ages?—C. N.

Vers. 5—10.—*The dignity of human nature shows that the Incarnation was not degrading to the Godhead.* The apostle proceeds with his argument broken off at end of the first chapter. The first chapter deals with the Deity of Christ; the second with his humanity; thus *the Epistle is based on the fact of the dual nature of our Lord.* Having spoken of the Godhead of Christ, he has to meet the objection which presented itself with great force to the Hebrews. *Why should this glorious Being stoop to the humiliation of Jesus of Nazareth?* To the Jew, Christ crucified was a stumbling-block (see John x. 30—33; xii. 32—34). The writer needs to justify the Incarnation. (Observe, he does not attempt to prove the real humanity of Jesus. Clearly the Hebrews did not share subsequent doubts on this point, for there is not a word in the Epistle—though it is based on the fact—to prove that Jesus was man; it is assumed, than which there can be no stronger evidence of it, for if the Hebrews, Christ's contemporaries, cherished no doubts with regard to it, the later doubts of others

are worth nothing.) In justifying the Incarnation, the writer uses in this chapter four progressive arguments, closely woven together yet distinct. The first is in this passage. Subject—*The dignity of human nature shows that the Incarnation was not degrading to the Godhead.* True, Christ did assume human nature, and that was an act of infinite condescension; but there was no degradation in it, for consider how sublime this nature is in God's estimate.

I. THE DIGNITY OF HUMAN NATURE AND MAN'S FAILURE TO ATTAIN IT. (Vers. 5—8.) (Observe marginal readings in Revised Version, ver. 5, "the inhabited earth;" ver. 7, "for a little while.") In proof of this dignity, the writer quotes from their own Scriptures. (Observe that this Epistle is very remarkable for its quotations from the Old Testament. Many of the Epistles addressed to Gentile believers have no quotations, but in this they are found in almost every page. To the Jew the Scriptures were a final authority, so in writing to them each successive step of the argument is based thereon.) He bids them, therefore, read in the eighth psalm how lofty is God's idea with regard to man. The picture drawn there may be ideal, may never have been reached; but it is God's idea, and being so, some day it shall be fulfilled. What, then, is the proper dignity of humanity? what the place in the universe to be filled by this wondrous being, man, who in himself, unlike God's other works, is a combination of the material and the spiritual? The psalm specifies in token of man's greatness: 1. *His lordship over creation.* "Thou didst set him over the works of thy hands; thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet." Man is not one of innumerable beings made to people the earth; not a link in an endless series, as though up to him all previous things have led, and from him others higher still shall be evolved. The world was made for him, made and furnished (see Gen. i.) to be his home, the scene of his education, the means of his discipline, the minister to his happiness. Man is greater, in God's sight, than all the worlds; he was made to be a crowned and sceptred king, with them for his servants; he was made in God's image to have dominion over them all. 2. *His fellowship with God.* "Man, thou art mindful of him . . . the son of man, thou visitest him!" God rejoices in all the works of his hands, but how different his feeling towards men! They are to have communion with him, which involves similarity of nature; they are taught to pray, "Our Father, which art in heaven." The parable of the prodigal son is the picture of his attitude with regard to them—his sorrow, and joy, and welcome, and fellowship, and care. How great that nature of which this is true! 3. *His destiny to be higher than the angels.* "Thou madest him, for a little while, lower than the angels; . . . thou didst put all things . . . under his feet." Nothing is left out; angels, principalities, powers, are included. How great the angels; how sublime the idea Scripture gives of them! But man is only made lower than they for a little while. He is the son, they are the servants. 4. *His redemption secured at so great a price.* "Jesus . . . should taste death for every man." How great is he of whom Christ could say, "I will give my heavenly crown for him; I will pass through the humiliation of a sorrowful human life for him; I will bow my head in accursed death for him; I will forfeit my Father's favour for him!" But *this glorious dignity is not yet reached.* "But now we see not yet all things subjected to him." If we compare the eighth psalm with the actual condition of things, it reads like a satire. Traces of man's greatness are seen in his moral nature and achievements; but when we behold the poverty, ignorance, disease, misery, crime, sin, which abound under the sun, and compare them with the magnificent ideal of Scripture, the distance of the actual from the ideal seems too great to be destroyed.

II. THE ASSUMPTION OF HUMAN NATURE BY CHRIST, AND ITS PERFECTION REACHED IN HIM. "But we behold him who hath been made for a little while lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour." This ideal psalm is realized in Christ; all that man was to be we see in Jesus. 1. *Christ assumed that nature which is lower than the angels.* Mark the contrast between this and the substance of the first chapter. This is the first chapter: Christ "so much better than the angels." This is the second: "Jesus, made for a little while lower than the angels." How great the contrast between the angels who heralded his birth, and the feeble babe; between the angels who ministered to him, and the lonely Man worn with conflict; between the angels who strengthened him in Gethsemane, and the Man of sorrows, whose sweat was as it were great drops of blood; between the angels

who kept his tomb, and that lifeless body! Think of the Lord of angels needing angelic ministry!

"His earnest prayer, his deepening groans,
Were heard before angelic thrones;
Amazement wrapped the sky!
'Go, strengthen Christ,' the Father said:
'Th' astonished seraph bowed his head,
And left the realms on high."

2. *Christ has lifted that nature far higher than the angels.* "We behold him crowned with glory and honour." When Christ returned to his native position, he retained his human nature for evermore; as when he trod the streets of Jerusalem and hills of Galilee—"this same Jesus." Exalted to the right hand of the Father, he is still "the Man," the man wearing his human body, that body spiritual in the like of which Moses and Elias appeared at the Transfiguration, and the saints will be enwrapped at the resurrection. It is thus, as man, he is exalted King over all. To him, as man, every knee doth bow in heaven, and shall bow on earth; on his head, as man, are many crowns; in his human hand rests the sceptre which rules the universe; and before him, as man, the hosts of heaven continually do cry, "Thou art the King of glory, O Christ." 3. *Christ's ability for this was due to the suffering of death.* Christ inherits the throne of heaven as man, as the meritorious reward of his sufferings. So Isaiah (liii. 11, 12); so Paul (Phil. ii. 6—11). What Christ is in his mediatorial capacity he is because he died; apart from his death, he would have no power to be or do anything for man. Man has failed to be what God meant him to be; Christ has become it all; and through the suffering of death retains it all for evermore.

III. THE PERFECTION OF HUMAN NATURE IN CHRIST IS THE PLEDGE OF ITS PERFECTION IN HIS PEOPLE. That is evidently the idea here: "We see not yet all things subjected to [man], but we behold Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honour." The truth is that whereas we are groaning in our failure to reach the eighth-psalm ideal, Christ has attained that sublimity which human nature ought to reach; and through him we shall one day attain it too. The littleness under which we labour we shall shake off, and rise to that grand summit in which there will be only One above us, God over all; the pledge of this being that that summit is already reached by Christ as man. 1. *The perfection of human nature in Christ is the token of the complete removal of man's disabilities.* God was unable to fulfil his ideal for man, because sin forfeited exaltation and incurred abasement. Christ undertook, as man's Representative, to remove the sin by an atoning death. The exaltation of Jesus from the sepulchre to the throne was the proof that the atonement was sufficient. Now the hindrance to God fulfilling his purpose for man is removed: the eighth-psalm ideal is that purpose; that ideal will, therefore, be attained. 2. *The perfection of human nature in Christ is the assurance of all power in the hands of the Mediator.* Christ raised to supreme authority as God-Man, means that all the authority he possesses is to be used in his redemptive work. Then, depend upon it, he will redeem perfectly; he will save up to the highest point of salvation of which man is capable, and which even God desires. There can be no fear of his people reaching the eighth-psalm ideal when they know that on purpose to raise them to it, Christ, in the nature and character of Saviour, has been placed on the highest throne. 3. *The perfection of human nature in Christ is the promise of perfection to all who are to be made like him.* His people are to be "glorified together" with him, sit with him on his throne, become like him when they see him. See here what Christ is; learn thereby what man in him shall be; for Christ in glory is but the First-fruits of perfected humanity.—C. N.

Ver. 10.—*The Incarnation, being the only means of securing perfect salvation for men, was becoming to God.* This is the second argument by which the writer justifies the Incarnation. In the previous five verses he has shown that it was not degrading to the Godhead. From that he advances to affirm here that it was actually becoming; for the stress of this text is in the words, "It became him." Note that the expression, "Author of their salvation," is simply equivalent to *their Saviour*. Also that the word "perfect" does not refer to the perfection of Christ's character; that was eternally perfect; no sufferings could make Christ better than he was. You must apply the term to *his*

ability to save. Apart from his humiliation he could not have been a perfect Saviour. The apostle says, therefore, that to make Christ perfect as a Saviour, through humiliation, was in harmony with the perfections of God. Subject—*The Incarnation, being the only means of securing perfect salvation for men, was becoming to God.*

I. *IT BECAME GOD TO SAVE.* That is the lowest step in the argument, and does not need proof. God does save, that is certain; then it must become him to save, for he can do nothing which is unbecoming. But think of what the text implies about this salvation which it becomes God to give. 1. *Salvation originates in him.* "Through whom are all things." Salvation is the outcome of his will. Not suggested by human supplication; not claimed by the recovered righteousness of any that had fallen; not extorted by the atonement of some gracious Saviour. It came from himself. "God so loved the world," etc. There salvation is traced back to its source, and revealed as his act. The desire to save, the method of saving, the work of saving, the whole transaction from beginning to end, is of God. 2. *Salvation glorifies him.* "For whom are all things." Everything he does is for the good pleasure of his will and the glory of his Name. What a beautiful light that throws upon redemption! How it falsifies the idea that God is unwilling to save! God has so identified himself with man, so fixed his love on him, that he is not happy if man remains unsaved. The salvation he has devised—we say it is for man; Scripture says it is for God. 3. *Salvation is gratuitous from him.* He provides a "perfect" Saviour—One who should do it all. Salvation is a gift, all done for man, so that man in his helplessness has only to receive. God saves men for nothing. Put all this together. God saves; this salvation originates with him; glorifies him; is gratuitous from him. That is the kind of salvation which he bestows. Then this is the point—such a salvation as that becomes God. Then *see what kind of a God ours is.* What must he be of whose nature this is the outcome; of whose thought and love this is the fitting expression; of whose character this is the suitable revelation; who is never more perfectly revealed than in Christ crucified; of whom it can be said, such a salvation "became him"?

II. *IT BECAME GOD TO PROVIDE A PERFECT SAVIOUR.* "It became him to make the Author of their salvation perfect." *Nothing less than a perfect Saviour would become God.* "As for God, his way is perfect." Being perfect in himself, he can devise nothing imperfect. Being perfect in his resources, he cannot fail to accomplish perfectly all he devises. It is so in everything. Then we are sure that, in his greatest work, he whom he sends as Redeemer will be so minutely perfect that the utmost Divine wisdom and human need can never discover a particular in which he could be made more efficient. Less than that could not become God. All things are to show forth his glory. But his redeeming work is his crowning work; by it pre-eminently is to be manifested his transcendent greatness, and evoked the sweetest and most triumphant song of eternity. Then this must be the most complete work which even God can do; anything unfinished here could not become him. Moreover, consider that he bestows other blessings more than royally. His bestowments surpass our need. His measure of giving is "exceeding abundantly above," etc. But the Saviour is his unspeakable Gift, the highest expression of his mercy. It is inconceivable, then, that he who outdoes our need in everything else should under-supply it in his greatest gift of all. It is evident that less than a perfect Saviour could not become him. But what is necessary to a perfect Saviour?—for this, whatever it be, we shall find in Christ. 1. *A perfect Saviour must perfectly remove sin's penalty.* The penalty of sin must be dealt with first. Sin's power cannot be removed until the penalty is gone. That penalty is an awful reality. "The wrath of God is revealed," etc.; "The wages of sin is death;" "The wicked shall be turned," etc. Then, if he who comes forth to save is a perfect Saviour, he must be able to remove every whit of that penalty for evermore, and able to do it by himself. Christ claims to do that. "There is therefore now no condemnation," etc. 2. *A perfect Saviour must secure perfect holiness in the saved.* For there is no salvation but holiness. Man is surrounded by temptations, and the slave of corrupt dispositions, and painfully far from God's ideal. If he who comes to save is a perfect Saviour, he must be able to deliver us from sin's power, and lead us up to that sanctification which is God's will concerning us. He must be able to do it perfectly, however low we have fallen, or however helpless we have become. Christ claims to do that. "O wretched man," etc. 3. *A perfect Saviour must preserve us from the perils of the way, and lead us to the*

perfect glory. For between us and the celestial city are dangers any of which is enough to swallow us up. But if he who comes to save is a perfect Saviour, he must lead us safely through all these, and not leave us till he has brought us within the golden gates where no foe can enter. Christ claims to do that. "He is able to save them to the uttermost," etc. 4. *A perfect Saviour and a perfect salvation in him*—what a pillow for weary man to lay his head upon! It must be so, for "it became him to make the Author of our salvation perfect."

III. IT BECAME GOD TO MAKE THE SAVIOUR PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERINGS. Does not the text imply that God was shut up to this mode of saving? "It became him," for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing," etc. That is, God's boundless resources, his unlimited power and wisdom, were of no avail here; only through Christ crucified was salvation possible. Observe that it did not become God to save in any other way, because: 1. *Only thus could salvation be in harmony with his majesty.* Men say such condescension as is implied in the Deity of Jesus of Nazareth is derogatory to the Godhead; it is inconceivable that the majesty of the Most High should stoop to such a depth. But all God's attributes are equal; his condescension, therefore, must be as great as his majesty. Because his majesty is infinite, no less than infinite condescension would become him. 2. *Only thus could salvation be in harmony with his holiness.* The salvation God gives must be consistent with his infinite displeasure at sin. His attributes are inseparable; all that God is in every part of him, and every deed. As he cannot do what is not love, neither can he do what is not holiness. He could not, then, pardon sin without at the same time uttering his abhorrence of sin. How could he do this apart from the cross? 3. *Only thus could salvation be in harmony with his justice.* The problem to be solved was—how to be "a just God and a Saviour;" true to the honour of his Law, the rectitude of his government, the integrity of his word, and at the same time extend mercy to the sinner; how at once fulfil and yet remit the threatened penalty? No salvation could become him in which those requirements were not equally met. How could they be met but in the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ—"the Just for the unjust"? (Beware of the theory that the atonement was unjust because God thereby punished the innocent for the guilty. That is not true; God never did that. He took the suffering on himself. He who atoned was God.) 4. *Only thus could salvation be in harmony with his love.* For one end of the atonement was to reveal God's love, and so make holiness possible to man; for of that holiness God's love is the mainspring. The atonement, therefore, must be the highest expression of Divine love. That was only reached at Calvary. It therefore became God to make the Saviour perfect through sufferings. Is not "the offence of the cross" removed now?

IV. IT BECAME GOD, THROUGH THIS SAVIOUR PERFECTED BY SUFFERINGS, TO BRING MANY SONS UNTO GLORY. 1. *It becomes him to make use of this perfected Saviour to the full.* Having made Christ a Saviour at such cost, it would not become him not to make the greatest use of him. To make such sacrifice to get the power to save and then not to use that power would be inconsistent, would cancel his own undertaking. In consistency God cannot withhold giving this perfect salvation to whosoever will. 2. *It becomes him to reward this perfected Saviour to the utmost.* What shall be the recompense for the Redeemer's sufferings? What result shall become such woe as his? I see in distant vision "many sons brought unto glory;" "a great multitude, which no man can number," etc. Yea, "he shall see of the travail of his soul, and be," etc.—C. N.

Vers. 11—16.—*The Incarnation a necessity of the redeeming work of Christ.* A third argument to justify the Incarnation. The writer has already shown, first, that the Incarnation was not degrading; and second, that it was actually becoming; he here goes on to say that it was necessary. Subject—*The Incarnation a necessity of the redeeming work of Christ.*

I. OUR LORD ON EARTH WAS A MAN AMONGST MEN. (Ver. 11.) "Partook of the same" (ver. 14). As usual, the writer appeals to the Jewish Scriptures; they assert, he says, the humanity of the Messiah. 1. *The doctrine of the Incarnation is based on the entire revelation of God.* It does not depend on "proof-texts," but underlies the whole Book; it is the truth which gives unity to the whole, so that if it be removed the Scriptures fall to pieces and are inexplicable. How delicately it is woven into the web of Scripture and pervades the whole fabric, is seen in the particular texts the apostle

quotes here. They are not the texts we should have chosen—indeed, we should hardly have applied them to Christ; but he who, like the writer, is taught by the Spirit, and has deepest spiritual insight into these pages, discerns Christ where others do not, as Jesus did when “beginning at Moses and all,” etc. The Old Testament begins with the promise, “The seed of the woman,” etc., goes on to state that he should be of the stock of Abraham, tribe of Judah, family of David, born of a virgin in Bethlehem, be a Man of sorrows, bear the chastisement of sins, and pour out his soul unto death; and then it closes with the declaration that he is about to come, and that his coming should be preceded by his forerunner. Then the Gospels come in as the counterpart and fulfilment of all that, and there is not an Epistle which follows which is not based on the fact with which Paul opens his Epistle to the Romans (1. 3). This doctrine is the key to the Bible; and no wonder, for this is the great mystery of godliness, “God was manifest in the flesh.” 2. *This doctrine involves that Christ was at the same time possessed of two distinct natures.* That is hinted at here, in “not ashamed to call [men] brethren,” which intimates an act of condescension which could not be fulfilled by one who was merely man. You cannot imagine, it affirmed, e.g. of Moses, or Elijah, or Paul, or John, that they were “not ashamed,” etc.; the bond of brotherhood in their case existed of necessity, and there could be no humility in admitting it, as is implied with regard to Jesus. The words are meaningless, unless he was by nature far exalted above man, and assumed man’s nature voluntarily. Thus the writer who declares Christ’s manhood plainly implies that Christ was more than man. He who walked the earth in human nature was at the same time the most high God. It is not that he laid aside his Godhead. He could not do that; God cannot undefine himself. Being God before the Incarnation (as he said, “Before Abraham was, I am”), he was God on earth as he must be for ever. How it could be we know not, but our ignorance of the mode does not prove impossibility. He who “in the beginning was God . . . was made flesh.” 3. *The doctrine of the Incarnation asserts that, notwithstanding Christ’s Godhead, he was a real man.* In opposition to the later theories that his body was a phantom, or that his soul was not human, the writer asserts here that Christ was man in every respect save sin. Are not the particular texts quoted here chosen to prove this exhaustively? Man is a trinity—body, soul, and spirit; if Christ was man, he was human in these respects. “Behold I and the children which thou hast given me. Forasmuch as the children are sharers in flesh and blood.” In the Old Testament the Messiah calls men his children; that points to likeness in physical nature. Christ was born, grew, needed food and rest, sweat drops of blood, was nailed to the cross, lay in the tomb, bore nail and spear marks. *Christ had a human body.* Again, “I will declare thy Name unto my brethren.” Does not that—“brethren”—point to what we call soul, the seat of affection, emotion, thought, conscience, etc.? He increased in wisdom, was moved with compassion. “Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus;” “Jesus wept.” *Christ had a human soul.* Again, “In the midst of the congregation will I sing thy praise,” and again, “I will put my trust in him.” Christ worshipping God, and trusting God! Doesn’t that refer to what we call spirit, that part of our nature by which we are brought into fellowship with the Most High? Christ’s spiritual life was wrought by the Holy Ghost as ours is, tempted by our tempter, cherished by the same Divine Word, needed communion with the Father, prayed and worshipped and trusted as ours do. *Christ had a human spirit.* Body, soul, and spirit, he was Man amongst men. Beware of supposing that, because he was God at the same time, his Godhead in any way lessened the infirmities and necessities of his humanity; he would not have been true man had it been so, and could have been no example to men. As God, there was the hiding of his power in his humanity. Christ entered on his work, and fulfilled it in the position in which Adam stood before he fell.

II. ONLY AS MAN COULD HE DELIVER MEN FROM BONDAGE. (Vers. 14, 15.) A confessedly difficult verse. 1. *Death is curse.* This text is made difficult of comprehension, because it is read as though it referred to the fear which Christians often have of dying. We must remove that idea from the text. The writer is dealing with what is much more fundamental than that. Observe, the text does not speak of bondage to the fear of death, but of bondage to Satan through the fear of death. The death here spoken of is death in its main idea. Death as curse; death as witnessing to man’s sinful condition; death as the declaration that he is under condemnation. Man’s fear of death

is but another name for his sense of guilt, his knowledge that he is under the curse of the Almighty. 2. *The curse being removed, man is set free to holiness.* Holiness is the end of Christ's work. The passage begins with, "He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified." To sanctify us was his aim. But holiness is impossible where the "fear of death," i.e. a sense of being under the curse, is. There is only one principle from which holiness can spring—love to God (that is the difference between morality and holiness). But we can never love him till we know that he loves us—know, i.e., that the curse is removed. Holiness, however, is possible then; then obedience is voluntary, service joyous, surrender easy, resemblance to him certain. 3. *Being set free to holiness, Satan's power is gone.* He is here said to have "the power of death"—a remarkable expression, to which we must not attach the wrong meaning. Satan cannot inflict death, has no dominion over death. Christ says, "I have the keys," etc. But "fear of death," i.e. sense of being under the curse, is the power Satan wields to keep men in bondage. He blinds them to Divine love, tells them God is angry with them, is a hard Master, has no claim on them, and the result is that men continue in sin. But when their eyes are open to see he is a liar, that the curse is removed, that God is love, that God in Christ is able to extend mercy, then the soul breaks away from his bonds into that holiness which is liberty, and Satan's power ends. 4. *This could only be accomplished by Christ's humanity.* Only by Christ becoming man could the sense of curse be taken away. Its removal required that the curse should be endured by a substitute; but no substitute could be accepted in man's stead who was not of man's kind, and the Law must be obeyed by the nature to which it was given, and its penalty endured by the nature to which it was due. Moreover, if Christ is to suffer and die, he must have a nature capable of suffering and death. So the holiness of man is based on the humanity of Jesus.

III. AS IT WAS MEN CHRIST SOUGHT TO REDEEM, HIS MANHOOD WAS THEREFORE A NECESSITY. (Ver. 16.) The Old Version, owing to the words in italics, greatly mystifies this verse; as it stands in the Revised Version it is the natural completion of the writer's argument. The "taking hold" (or, "laying hold") is the laying hold to save. Christ assumed human nature, not angelic, because he is the Saviour, not of angels, but of men. 1. *Christ passed by the necessities of fallen angels.* Here is a great mystery. Why did not Christ save fallen angels? We cannot tell. There may be a wide difference between the sins of devils and the sins of men. It has been suggested that the one love evil for its own sake, as when the tempter in the garden would wreck the world; and that the other love it for some fancied good it brings, as when the woman thought she saw a good, and therefore put forth her hand and sinned. There may be some such radical difference which makes salvation possible only in the one case, but we are not told; all we know is "the angels which kept not their first estate, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." "He took not hold of angels." 2. *Christ stretched out his redeeming hand to man.* He "laid hold of the seed of Abraham;" as a shepherd overtakes a sheep that is running away, lays hold of it, lays it on his shoulders rejoicing, and declares, "My sheep shall never perish, neither," etc. Mark the condescension of the Saviour, and the exaltation of the human race. We are lost in astonishment as we see Christ pass by the myriads of celestial beings that had fallen, and set his heart on laying hold of us, that he might raise us as much higher than they, as the children of the king are higher than his servants. *This involved the necessity of the Incarnation.* But more—it reveals an unutterable desire on Christ's part that man should be saved, and the fact that man may be saved if he will.—O. N.

Ver. 17, 18.—*Christ's humanity the result of his desire to be more than a Saviour from sin.* The climax of the argument for the consistency of our Lord's humanity. Observe in exposition: 1. That "reconciliation for the sins of the people" is not the central idea of these verses. That has already been dealt with. Here we have a new thought—Christ's ability to succour the tempted. 2. That our Lord's humanity could not make him a merciful and faithful High Priest. He was that already, but thus he proved himself to be this. 3. That the word "tempted" here is not to be confined to the meaning of solicitation to sin.

1. CHRIST, IN THE ENDURANCE OF TRIAL, WAS MADE IN ALL THINGS LIKE UNTO

HIS BRETHREN; that is, he passed through every class of human suffering. 1. *There were the sufferings which came through human frailty.* Christ had no sin, but he experienced those forms of suffering to which innocent human nature is exposed, such as poverty, weariness, dependence, pain, fear of death. We get through our trials more easily because we do not foresee them; but Christ foresaw his, and they were intensified as he drew nearer his end. His life was a conscious advance into deeper gloom. 2. *There were the sufferings which came through his holy nature.* Thirty-three years in a world of sin must have been continuous pain to the Holy One of God. Suffering in the presence of evil is in proportion to our holiness and our aversion to evil. Christ not only saw a world wandering away from God, but he knew what was in man; he not only saw the malice on men's faces and the guilt in their lives; he read the thoughts and intents of the heart. And, still worse, he felt the hot breath of the arch-tempter on his cheek, and heard the whispering of his hateful suggestions. 3. *There were the sufferings which came through his love to man.* The pain of sympathy. If Love has her deep joys, she has, too, her deep griefs; if she wears a crown of triumph, she wears, too, a crown of thorns. Love is afflicted in all the afflictions of her beloved. What must have been the suffering of immeasurable Love in witnessing the woes of man!

II. THIS ENDURANCE OF OUR TRIALS PROVES THAT CHRIST WILL BE MERCIFUL AND FAITHFUL IN HIS POSITION AS HIGH PRIEST. 1. *Christ making propitiation holds the position of High Priest.* Christ's high priesthood is only glanced at here, stated to rest something on it. As the high priest alone could offer the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement, so Christ, offering the one atoning sacrifice, showed himself to be High Priest. And the main idea in that is that the high priest was essentially the mediator between God and man. As God's representative he acted for God toward the people; as the people's representative he acted for them toward God. Christ, then, holds this position. He conveys the Father's gifts to us, and our need to the Father. It depends entirely on him whether we receive the gifts of Heaven. 2. *If, holding that position, he would deal with us in mercy, all we need is assured.* There is nothing he cannot secure for us, if he will. The question depends on whether he has sympathetic feeling towards us in our grief. Is Christ the Mediator compassionate? 3. *The great proof of his compassion is that for our succour he endured so much more than was necessary for mere propitiation.* Our Lord's incarnation and death were necessary for atonement, but he endured much beside that, going down to the lowest state of innocent human experience. Much of his suffering was an extra burden voluntarily assumed with a view to man's comfort in sorrow. He cared so much about our griefs that in order to allay them he passed through them himself. We cannot doubt his heart after that.

III. THIS PROOF OF HIS HIGH PRIESTLY COMPASSION IS ABLE TO SUCCOUR HIS PEOPLE WHEN THEY ARE TRIED. 1. *It enables them to trust his sympathy, for he has experienced their pains.* Christ's suffering has not made him more sympathetic. His knowledge and sympathy were perfect before; but it gives us more confidence in going to him for succour. 2. *It enables them to expect aid from him, for he suffered that he might aid.* Why, his poverty, bereavement, weariness, loneliness, shame, being misunderstood, but that he might succour us! Then, will he not succour us? 3. *It enables them to anticipate victory through him, for he conquered in all his woe.* Who can aid us in our difficulties, like him who has already trodden these difficulties underfoot? What aid can be more satisfactory than his who wears the laurels of victory over those very evils which assail us? Our foe will fly when he sees his Conqueror on our side.—C. N.

Vers. 1—4.—*The glory of the Gospel.* I. HERE ARE TO BE SEEN THE SUPERIOR GLORY OF THE GOSPEL TO THE LAW IN THE PERSON OF ITS REVEALER. There are frequent proofs of the wisdom of God in the adaptations of means and ends both in the spheres of providence and the institutions of worship. When Jehovah published the Law from Sinai, the angels were mediators between himself and the tribes of Israel; as it is written in Deut. xxxiii. 2, "The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of his saints or angels." Stephen remarks that "the people received the Law by the disposition, or ministry, of angels," who probably, by vocal utterance, proclaimed the commands which required and shaped the obedience of the Hebrew race. This was an august and sublime ministry, and raised the giving of the Law above the great events and important crises of earthly

affairs, whether they were the gaining of victories, the founding of cities, or the coronation of monarchs. There are many ranks, orders, and principalities among the angels, who are pre-eminent for their wisdom, power, and holiness; but they must all yield to One who is far above them all. This is the Son of God, who alone was able to convey, with sufficient clearness, attraction, and power, all the sacred truths which concern the character of God, the character of man, and the way of bringing the sinner into a state of reconciliation now, and into the possession of eternal life hereafter. He said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father;" and in all the acts of his public ministry and his sacrificial death he revealed God as he had never been known before.

"He is the Eternal Image bright,
Where angels view the Father's light;
And there in him the humblest swain
May read his holy lesson plain."

The glory of our Lord is further displayed by the confirmation of his work by the Divine Spirit, who enabled the apostles and others to work miracles of healing, and gave those supernatural powers which were an indisputable authentication that Jesus Christ was the true Messiah. These miracles transcended the usual course of human experience—were signs of the connection of the gospel with Divine power, and were fitted to awaken wholesome wonder in the hearts of those who heard the truth. It need occasion no surprise that apostles and early believers should feel an unshaken confidence in their own convictions, and desire to implant similar convictions in the hearts of others. The transmission of gospel truth thus began with Christ, and through apostles and those who heard the apostles, repeated the same facts and doctrines to others; and so the lamp of light has been handed on from one believer to another, and from one generation to another; and practically calling attention to the glory of the Transfiguration, in which we hear the voice, "This is my beloved Son: hear him."

II. THERE FOLLOWS THE SOLEMN RESPONSIBILITY OF HEARING AND OBEYING THE VOICE OF JESUS CHRIST. Wherever the Word of God comes there is an altered relation of the soul towards its Divine Author, and serious indebtedness to him for the use of so precious a talent. Caution and prayer are necessary, lest the truths which our Lord proclaimed should silently evaporate from the soul like morning dew, and leave the spirit dry and barren. They may, amid the pressure of worldly affairs, the attractions of this life, and the agency of Satan, who carries away the seed sown, be lost for all the purposes of salvation. There must be decisive and intentional acts of meditation, prayer, and obedience, and then they will not slip away from us. They should be held as the miser holds his gold, lest the cunning and violence of men should rob him of his treasure. The gravity of this question enhanced by the certainty that neglect will be punished; for if the offenders against a law published by angels "died without mercy" (Heb. x. 8), then those who disobey the will of the Lord, who is infinitely above angels, must meet with a tremendous penalty and retribution; because to offend him is, in a sense, to tread underfoot the blood of the Son of God and do despite to the Spirit of grace. To turn aside from him is to reject unutterable grace; and to undervalue the labours, sufferings, and martyrdoms of apostles, faithful preachers of the gospel, and the life and prayers of believers, and to incur the judicial anger of him who requires all men "to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." The question is asked, "How shall we escape?" The reply must be, "There is no escape." It is the great salvation, because it is the fruit of an eternal purpose, revealed by holy prophets, illustrated by various types, wrought out by the incarnation, ministry, and sorrow of Jesus, who drank the bitter and brimming cup in Gethsemane and on the cross; and has engaged the work of the Holy Spirit and the co-operation of the Church of God. It is great in the range of its present blessings and in the prospects of everlasting life. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Conscience answers, "There is no escape."—B.

Vers. 5—9.—*The human nature of our Lord foreshadowed and his sovereignty over all things realized through his sufferings and death.* The author pursues his argument, which is to show the indisputable superiority of our Lord to the angels, unto whom the kingdom of grace is not made subject. In the quotation from the eighth psalm there

is declared the condescension and goodness of God towards man in appointing him to be the lord and ruler of creation. When Jehovah pronounced the blessing upon Noah and his sons, he said, "And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered" (Gen. ix. 2). This sublime promise is realized in the exaltation of the Son of God, who was made for a short time lower than the angels; and yet, even in his state of humiliation, showed his kingly power over the diseases of men, the storms of the sky, and the fishes of the sea. But there is the plain fact that all things are not put under men; yet we see Jesus of Nazareth made lower than the angels that he should fulfil the purposes of eternal grace, taste death in its unutterable bitterness and agony that life might be offered to mankind, and now crowned with glory and honour. There is a sacred lesson conveyed to Jewish Christians in the allusion to the death of our Lord, since the offence of the cross was likely to disturb their faith, and lead them to surrender a truth which was a stumbling-block to many of their countrymen. Jesus passed through this valley of the shadow of death to reach the throne where he is now exalted, angels, principalities, and powers, believers and unbelievers, being now subject unto him. The glory and honour which he has attained raise him far above all patriarchs, priests, prophets, and the whole angelic world; and therefore those that kiss the Son, in unlimited trust and loving obedience, may expect all the blessedness now and hereafter from their faith in the Redeemer.—B.

Vers. 10—18.—His exaltation endears his association with his followers. There is a Divine becomingness and suitability in the process of salvation, which suggests that as the Leader of believing souls should pass through sorrow and gain his official perfectness through sufferings which show at what a cost redemption was procured, they qualify him to become an Example to which Christians are to be conformed. He reached his glory through distress and agony, and his followers are through much tribulation to enter into the kingdom of God. He showed himself to be a merciful and faithful High Priest, by his tender compassion for men, and his fulfilment of promise, prophecy, and type; for he was "the end of the Law for righteousness." Looking unto Jesus we overcome impatience and complaint, and waiting upon him we renew our strength; for "if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." Motives to sustain us in this career are supplied in these verses, which consist of his gracious avowal of his followers as his brethren, of whom he is not ashamed. They "are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," and are sanctified by the Divine Spirit, to a life of separation from evil and consecration to all holiness of life. If Joseph was not ashamed of his brethren—for they had all one father—and presented them to Pharaoh, much more will our Lord avow his brethren by expressing his love to them and vindication of them. They are now somewhat like him, and are conformed to him as the Firstborn among many brethren. They are not of the world, as he was not of the world, and being joined to him are one Spirit. This truth is confirmed and illustrated by quotations from the pages of the Old Testament. The first is from the twenty-second psalm (ver. 22), where he affirms, "I will declare thy Name unto my brethren." These words denote that our Lord would be the Teacher of his brethren, and are confirmed by his declaration in John xvii. 26, where he said, "And I have declared unto them thy Name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." Then, like his brethren, he would confide in Jehovah, as it is written in Isa. xli. 2, "I will trust in him." The citations end with one drawn from Isa. viii. 18, "Behold, I and the children which thou hast given me," which are the words of the prophet in a time of prevalent unbelief, when he and his children who had received symbolical names were witnesses for the truth of God. Considering the past work of Christ in suffering to bring many sons unto glory, and his joy in claiming relationship with them, we conclude that he is not ashamed to call them brethren.—B.

Vers. 14—18.—Here we have stated the sublime results of the incarnation and death of Christ in their influence upon the present temptation and death of believers. Our Lord did not assume an angelic nature, which would have necessarily set him at some distance from us, since the experiences of those sinless and exalted beings would

have been to some degree inconceivable by us. He took hold of the seed of Abraham, and enshrined his Divine nature in human flesh and blood, and felt all the innocent emotions and sensations of our race. He was hungry and thirsty, he was weary and slept, and wept and rejoiced like his brethren. Then he felt the pangs of death, by which he achieved a happy and invaluable change in our views of departure from this world. Death had derived its terror from Satan, who prompted men to sin and then alarmed them with the fear of condemnation and punishment. Under the Law many regarded death with trembling and anxiety; and righteous men like Hezekiah shrank from the approach of the "king of terrors." It was bondage which restrained from enjoyment, and made life like a man wearing fetters from which he could not get free. The death of our Lord seemed the masterpiece of Satan; but it became the cause of his most humiliating overthrow, for ever after those who believe in Jesus may walk with serene confidence, in the light of the Redeemer's victory, towards their eternal rest, and realize the words, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

"O precious ransom! which once paid,
That *Consummatus est* was said,
And said by him that said no more,
But sealed it with his sacred breath!
Thou, then, that hast dispurged our score,
And dying met the death of death,
Be now, while on thy Name we call,
Our Life, our Strength, our Joy, our All"
(Sir H. Wotton.)

Being made like unto his brethren in the participation of their nature, he made, as a merciful and faithful High Priest, reconciliation for them by his sacrificial death. By his oblation he revealed the Divine displeasure against sin, and made a way for those who were once rebels to become reconciled to the character of God, his methods of salvation, and to the enjoyment of the privileges and hopes of the Christian life. He passed through a career of temptation in which Satan strove to overthrow him, the world endeavoured to turn him away from his work, and his fierce enemies, the Pharisees, strove to frustrate his gracious designs. He was alone in the vastness of the temptations he endured, and carried, without any earthly sympathy, the vast burden of his sorrows. Now, from his vast and painful experience, he is able to sympathize with all who are tempted, and to cheer them with the truth that, should every heart around be unmoved, and every ear closed to their griefs, he feels for them with a vividness and certainty which may awaken confidence, and increase their joy in the Lord.—B.

Ver. 3.—*God's sure judgment on those who neglect the great salvation.* I. NOTE THE APPEAL TO HISTORY. In the history of the Hebrew people God had shown the validity and seriousness of his messages. Those to whom the message had come had been disposed to slight it, either because of the improbability of the matter, or the mean appearance of the messenger. And behind both of these considerations it might also be that the message was very unpalatable. But however the message might appear to men, it was God's message, therefore necessary to be sent. The steadfast word through the angels we must take with a very wide significance, as including the prophets, though angels are specially mentioned because being so reverently regarded by the Hebrews. There was an *à fortiori* argument as applied to the message that came through the Son.

II. NOTE THE GREAT TRANSGRESSION AND DISOBEDIENCE WE MAY COMMIT. We may be negligent of the great salvation. Our own personality, with its great powers and with the claims which God has upon it, we may allow to go to wreck and ruin, instead of submitting to the process whereby God would save us, and make us capable of glorifying him in a perfect way. The man who in any physical peril should steadily neglect whatever means of escape were put in his way, if he perished, would be held to have in him the spirit of the suicide. He who takes active steps against his own life is held to be committing a crime against society; but he who neglects his physical welfare is also sinning against society, though society cannot define his offence so as

to punish him. But God, we know, can specify offences as we cannot; and here is one, that when a man has spiritual and eternal salvation laid before him he yet neglects it. And the more we study this state of negligence, the more we shall see how great a sin it involves.

III. THE INEVITABLE PUNISHMENT WHICH WILL COME FOR SUCH NEGLECT. How shall we escape it? It is a question parallel to that of Paul in Rom. ii. 3, "How shalt thou escape the judgment of God?" The question is not of escaping from the danger by some other means than what God has provided. It is as to how we shall get away from God's doom upon us for deliberately and persistently neglecting his loving provisions. How often New Testament exhortations make us face the thought of the great judgment-seat! We see what a serious thing in the sight of God simple negligence is. It is in heavenly affairs as in earthly, probably more harm is done by negligence of the good than by actual commission of the evil. Let there be strongest emphasis and deepest penitence in the confession, "We have not done the things we ought to have done."

IV. THE EXHORTATION TO ATTENTION. We must give more earnest heed to the things that have been heard. How close this exhortation comes! Things not only spoken but heard. The excuse is not permitted that we have not heard of these things. It is what we have heard, but have failed to treat rightly, to cherish and hold fast which constitutes our peculiar responsibility. Over against actual negligence there is the demand for close, continual attention. The meaning of salvation and the means of salvation are not to be discovered by listless hearts. We are attending too much to the wrong things—things that, in comparison with the so great salvation, are but as the fables and endless genealogies, attention to which Paul contemptuously condemned. And those who have to proclaim this salvation would do well to attend to that other counsel of Paul to Timothy, "Give heed to reading, exhortation, teaching," and so all of us need to be readers, learners, and especially submissive to the *πνεύματος* of the Holy Ghost.—Y.

Ver. 3, 4.—*The completeness with which the great salvation is made known.* The justness of God's visitation on those who neglect the great salvation lies in this, that the salvation has been so fully and variously proclaimed. Certainly this held in the instance of all to whom this Epistle was addressed; certainly it holds of all who can read the New Testament. With the Testament before us, it is our business, as prudent people, to make ourselves acquainted with the explanations, assurances, exhortations it contains on this matter of salvation.

I. THIS SALVATION WAS SPOKEN OF THROUGH THE LORD; i.e. through Jesus. Doubtless the reference here is specially to those solemn and awful intimations he gave to his disciples of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem. But the destruction of Jerusalem was itself only a type of a destruction more dreadful still. The worst thing was, not the destruction of the buildings, but the spiritual ruin of those who dwelt in them. This was the thing to be feared, that believers in Jesus should get infected by the lawless life around them, or should take unbelieving and self-indulgent ways to get away from peril. Therefore the Lord proclaimed salvation to him who would endure to the end. His own resurrection from the dead after men had done their very worst and got untrammelled their fullest opportunities, was itself an assurance of safety to those who fully trusted in him.

II. THE WORD OF THIS SALVATION CONFIRMED BY LISTENERS. We feel there must be a parallelism between the *ῥῆματα* of ver. 2 and the *ῥησέμματα* of ver. 3. The same God who gave authority to his messengers of old, and put on them a certain kind of honour by showing, in severe treatment of those who rejected them, the Divine origin of their message, also gave authority to certain persons to continue that news of salvation which Jesus had first of all made known. Jesus himself passed these persons through a manifold and searching discipline to qualify them for their work. He said many things to the common crowd, but of the mysteries of the kingdom he spoke for a while only to a chosen and docile circle; until at last the hour came when these listeners had to spread far and wide the same truths, for a benefit to every one who would attend to them. Jesus, in the greatness of his unique power, began—and it is ever the first step which is most difficult; others came and continued his work on his

lines, and made some at least of their auditors in every place to feel that what they said rested on a sure foundation of a reality.

III. AN EXPLICIT STATEMENT OF HOW THIS CONFIRMATION WAS PRODUCED. Never let us forget that the apostles were peculiarly witness-bearers (Luke xxiv. 48; Acts i. 8). Again and again this is the apostolic claim in the Acts of the Apostles. Therefore it is quite the thing to be expected that God should be introduced, bearing his testimony along with them. Certain things were done, manifestly transcending human power, and manifestly full of a Divine presence and intent to those who regarded them with an honest heart. It is part of the love of God that he seeks all means to strengthen our hearts in keeping hold of the truth as it is in Jesus. Evidence is nothing without a spirit to appreciate it; but God knew that wheresoever the gospel went there would be some appreciating spirits, and to them the truth came by agencies such as bore it forward to an abiding home in their hearts. Evidence, of course, changes as the ages change; but truth is ever the same. The truth as it is in Jesus has not been altered; the need which that truth came to supply remains undiminished; and so we may be sure God is testifying still concerning that truth, the testimony being such that it satisfies the intellect because first of all it feeds and comforts the heart.—Y.

Vers. 8, 9.—*The seen present as a ground of confidence in the unseen future.* The confidence of one who believes in Messianic prophecy is that all things are as good as subjected to the Christ because God has declared this as his design. What we see is greatly short of subjection, and the subjected part we fail to see; we cannot rest our eyes upon it properly, because their attention is distracted by the sight of so much defiance, rebellion, and attempt at self-government in the far greater part of what ought to be subject to Christ. All the more need to find in what we may see the assurance and promise of the unseen. We do see—for that is what the words amount to—a humanized, a dying, and a risen Christ. “Crowned with glory and honour” is but a periphrasis for the resurrection, an indication of one of the things God did in raising his Son Jesus.

I. WHAT WE SEE SHOWS US THE POWER WHICH CAN PRODUCE THE DESIRED UNSEEN. God, in saying that all things shall be subjected to Christ, asserts *authority*. But by the course of his Son Jesus on earth he also manifested *power*. He took as it were a small section of time and space, and there gave us gracious illustration of what he is ever doing, some of it in the realm of the seen, but much more in that of the unseen. What power there is in the Incarnation! For obvious reasons the Incarnation is mostly connected with thoughts of God’s condescension, and the lowly-heartedness of Jesus himself. But these considerations must not blind us to the Incarnation as an illustration of God’s power. There is a mysterious power in making Jesus lower than the angels, and if it be true that there is a causal connection between sin and death as a *painful* experience, then some peculiar power must be involved in bringing the sinless Jesus in contact with the pain of death. Then, of course, there is the instance of power, most impressive and most cheering to us, in the raising of Jesus from the dead. If only we can really believe that God has power over the grave, we shall believe in his final conquest of all that can hurt his people.

II. WHAT WE SEE SHOWS US THE PURPOSE EVER WORKING TOWARDS THE DESIRED UNSEEN. The grace of God is manifest as well as the power of God. Jesus not only died; he tasted of death for every one—for every one who could benefit by the tasting of it. He tasted of it that by his resurrection he might show it was not the remediless poison men reckoned it to be. In his love he tasted death, as much as to say to men, “Fear not.” We have the Divine purposes in words, but those words are only the more perfect expressions of what we might infer from the works. It is true that “through the ages one increasing purpose runs”—a purpose much higher than that any individual man might form, or the combination of any men.

III. WHAT WE SEE SHOWS US PATIENCE WAITING FOR THE DESIRED UNSEEN. Great is the patience of God—a contrast to our impatience, our haste, our discontent, if we cannot get immediate results. The fulness of time has to be waited for before the Christ can enter the world; the fulness of manhood has to be waited for till he can begin to teach. Jesus himself must have his own time of sufficient seed-sowing before he can go to Jerusalem for the final scene. Delay, procrastination, postponement, is what God cannot tolerate where there ought to be decision, but for great steps to be

taken in his own mighty plans he can wait the proper time. If we do not yet see all things subjected to Jesus, if indeed the struggle seems often quite the other way, then there is all the more need for us to look at the career of Jesus from Bethlehem to Calvary as an illustration of how God can wait. In making up the cup which Jesus drank, many ingredients had to be waited for.—Y.

Ver. 10.—*The Father bringing the sons to glory.* Observe—

I. THE TERMS IN WHICH THE FATHER IS HERE DESCRIBED. Fatherhood is, of course, implied when sonship is spoken of; and this Father is the Being "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things." Here is the great unity towards which, consciously or unconsciously, all things are tending. Here is the cause of all existence, compared with whom all other causes that men analyze and apportion are but as the merest instruments. The assertion here is, of course, not a scientific truth; it is the dictum of the Spirit, the Heaven-inspired feeling with which we look up to the Father of our Teacher, Jesus. All things, not for me, or you, or for a class, a nation, a race, an age, or even the total of human beings, but for God. The consummation is not on earth, but in heaven. In the light of such a description of God, what wonder is it that increasing science should mean the increasing knowledge of harmony, the discovery of ever-deepening connections between things that seem on the surface quite unconnected?

II. A PURPOSE OF HIM WHO IS SO DESCRIBED. All things are for him. The question is—Do we obediently recognize that stamp and superscription on ourselves which indicates that we are for him? Everything which in its actual existence is just what God wants it to be is moving towards its glory. The seed moves to its glory in the flower, the flower to its glory in the fruit. Unfallen man would have had to be brought to glory—the glory of the perfect man in Christ Jesus. Society was meant to develop into a collection of men and women having in them the same beautiful spirit as was in Jesus. And that is the purpose still, only what should have come through a natural growth has to begin with a regeneration. Constantly in the New Testament is this basis-truth starting up, to remind us of its connection with all a Christian's efforts, all a Christian's hopes. God transforms us from his creatures into his children, and then leads us onward to glory. All who are seeking glory save in the way of sonship are seeking what will prove a mockery when they find it. "Bringing many sons to glory." In this word "many" there is cause for rejoicing and careful reflection. It is not enough to say that men are brought. They are brought as sons; nor are they as a scattered few, one here and there in a generation. They are many. How many is not the question. Here is answered in a measure the query of the disciples, "Are the saved few?" No, they are always many—more than we suppose, guessing by the mere appearance of things.

III. HOW THE LEADER OF THIS BAND OF CHILDREN IS FITTED FOR HIS WORK. The ἀρχηγός. He who starts the company, giving them the direction. We are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know the way in which we are going, and who is before us, responsible for that way being right. The true guide, the true leader, is he who himself has been all the way. This alone will save him from being a blind leader of the blind. He who would lead us must have gone in the way in which we have to go. And because our way is of necessity a way of suffering, his had to become the same. The way of man in any case is a way of suffering, and if he has chosen the motto, "For Christ's sake," then in proportion as that motto is written on his heart, in that same proportion would some sort of special trial be his lot. And so our very attachment to Christ is in a sense the means of bringing more suffering to him. The truth that Christians are persecuted for Christ's sake has its corresponding truth, that Christ was persecuted for God's sake. Jesus was perfected as a Leader by submitting to everything that in this world could come upon the outward man. He showed that there was a way, not round danger, but through danger, to an abiding safety beyond. He did not evade the darkness of the grave—he went into it; vanished, as most thought, for ever, and yet to emerge into everlasting light. Well may he ever sound in our ears those words of duty, promise, and hope, "Follow me."—Y.

Ver. 11.—*Christ and his brethren.* In the eleventh verse there is brought in a new

idea. The Author of salvation is now described in relation to his followers as the Sanctifier, and these followers as the sanctified. Jesus it is who sets us apart for God, and sets us apart by making a real difference between us and those who do not believe in him. In other words, if there is no real difference between us and the unbeliever, then we cannot reckon ourselves among the sanctified. Sanctification cannot consist in taking so many, irrespective of character or of any change which may be working in them. Jesus and all mankind are of one so far as a common humanity is concerned, and this is a condition for the further unity; but something more is needed. He who sanctifies is first of all sanctified himself—sanctified by the mystery of his birth, and by the Divine testimony at his baptism, and so on by everything that lifted him to a unique eminence among men. And all human beings who have the same Spirit of God working in them are thus reckoned for brethren of Jesus; and “he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” Though they be far below him in elevation of character and perception of truth, yet the relation is there, and the very way to make things better is to recognize the relation and found an appeal upon it. Our sanctifying Brother looks upon us in our imperfections, and cheers us with the thought that we shall become like him. He is not ashamed to call us brethren, but how ashamed we ought to be that we are so unworthy of him! Christ is far more intent on working out the possibilities of our life than we are ourselves.—Y.

Ver. 14.—*Christ robbing death of its terrors.* I OBSERVE A REASON FOR THE INCARNATION. When we look at all the Son of God achieved by the Incarnation, we see what an eminently reasonable thing it was. This seems to be forgotten by those who stumble at what they feel sure is a natural impossibility—that Jesus should have come into the world as he did. But if great ends were achieved by the Son of God thus stooping from his glory, entering the world as a babe, living a human life and dying a human death, then, when we remember how God is love, surely such extraordinary things become credible. If we can help people, we are bound to do everything that lies in *our power* to help them. And may we not reverently say that a similar obligation lies with the Divine Being? He knows what is most for our help, and does everything in his own wise time and way; and when it is done it is for us to search and see how it is just the thing that needed to be done.

II. CHRIST BECAME A HUMAN BEING LIKE US IN ORDER THAT HE MIGHT DIE. This strong way of putting the thing is necessary, in order to bring out the greatness of Christ's work with respect to death. With us death is the end of life, but by no means to be looked on as a result of life—a thing to be aimed at. But in the case of Jesus it was a great end to be reached. Jesus might have lived in the world for many years, teaching men, healing their sicknesses, gladdening their lives in many ways, and then, Enoch-fashion, he might have been translated that he should not see death. But if this had happened, the great end would have been missed.

III. THE RESULTS ACHIEVED BY THE DEATH OF CHRIST. Not all the results, of course; two are mentioned here. Christ died for men—that is the great general truth; and it is the way of God in the Scriptures to put one aspect of a truth in one place and another in another. 1. *Christ in dying brings to nothing him who has the might of death.* It is the devil who gives death its mighty power. Unseen by us, and by us incomprehensible, he works out his evil pleasure. And so Jesus had to go into the unseen world and conquer him. We can only know that there has been a struggle at all by what we see of the results. We know that he died, we know that he rose again; but all that happened in order to make his rising practicable is utterly beyond us. This is just one of the passages which make us feel how little we know, and how humble and diffident and cautious of speech we should be before the great unknown. The practical thing is that we should have a firm assurance in our hearts of how Christ has mastered the power of death, whencesoever that power may come. 2. *The deliverance of those enslaved by the fear of death.* Christ comes to bring liberty. The progress of true Christianity is constantly enlarging the liberty of the individual. And here is one way in which the individual is bound, self-fettered; and too often the more he allows himself to think, the more firmly the chains get fastened. He asks himself what is to come after death. So far is it from being certain that death means utter discontinuance of life, that many are in trouble just because of the uncertainty. Then others cling to

life just because life holds all that is certain to them. All their treasures are stored up on earth, for they have no notion of any other storehouse. It is, indeed, miserable work to have everything dependent on so uncertain a tenure as that of natural life. But Jesus comes and opens the prison-door. That is all he can do. By his death he has made deliverance possible from the fear of death. But man's confused heart goes on fearing even when the objects of its fear are turned into empty phantoms.—Y.

Vers. 17, 18.—*The Incarnation needed for an efficient priesthood.* I. WHEREIN AN EFFICIENT PRIESTHOOD LIES. The high priest is the representative of man before God. There are certain things which, as from God, are directed towards man; there are certain other things which, as from men, are directed towards God. These things are summed up, or rather the most important of them is specified, in the making reconciliation for the sins of the people. The word is the same as the publican used in saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" The thing needed is that these sins should be mentioned before God in their full reality and extent, and some sin offering made exactly correspondent to them. And for all this there is further needed on the part of the high priest two great qualities—pity and fidelity. The priest must pity his fellow-men as sinners, and to do this requires a very special exaltation of the heart. A man might easily pity his fellow-men for their physical pains and weaknesses, who would look with indifference on their alienation from God and the unrest of their hearts within them. Then as to the fidelity required in the priesthood, this is best seen in the elaborate instructions given concerning priestly duties by Moses; a sacrifice in which the least prescribed detail had been neglected was as no sacrifice at all.

II. THE DEFECTS OF EXISTING PRIESTHOODS. It is not exactly said that the long line of Aaron and his descendants had furnished a priesthood lacking in tenderness and faithfulness; but this is at least suggested, and it is certainly true. If, indeed, a merciful and faithful priesthood had been possible without making the humanity of Jesus to intervene, we are sure such intervention would not have occurred, for it is by no means the way of God to supersede what is doing its work efficiently. But the high priest hitherto had been taken from among men, and he was taken with all his infirmities upon him. He might have no due sense of sin. Judged by the state of his heart, thousands for whom he acted might be nearer to God than him. The priest lay exposed to just this peculiar temptation of having a lamentably inadequate sense of the sins of his fellow-men. Thus sacrifice became an unreal, perfunctory thing—altogether of the hand, and not at all of the heart.

III. HOW IT WAS THAT JESUS BECAME AN EFFICIENT HIGH PRIEST. Here we must look at Jesus historically. Strange it is to remember, in the light of the emphatic assertions of his priesthood contained in this Epistle, how he never stood at any altar in Jerusalem, never entered the holy of holies. And yet all the time he was preparing for priesthood and for sacrifice. He was declaring, by all his ceaseless words and acts of mercy, by all his faithfulness to truth, his fitness to be the High Priest. For perfect compassion and perfect fidelity, these constitute the vocation to the priestly office. And it must be one of ourselves who shows them. Jesus, as Son of God, had something which every descendant of Aaron had lacked; but until he became in all respects like his brethren, the most sinful of men had something which Jesus lacked. What wonder is it that angelic visits ceased once the humanity of Jesus became demonstrated and glorified! Angels, whatever their desire might be, could never come so close to us as Jesus—could never know as he knows, man like us, looking into our hearts with human eyes and yet with Divine penetration.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER III.

THE SON SUPERIOR TO MOSES.

Here begins the second section of the argument of the first four chapters (see summary given under ch. i. 5). But

though a new branch of the argument begins, it is linked, after the artistic manner of the Epistle, to what has gone before in a continuous chain of thought. This sequence is denoted by the initiatory *56er.*

Ver. 1.—Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus (Χριστὸν before ἱερεῖν is ill supported, and to be rejected from the text). Reference to what has gone before is perceptible throughout this verse. The persons addressed are “holy,” as being among the “sanctified” (ch. ii. 11); “brethren,” as being, with the writer, in this relation to Christ (ch. ii. 11, 12, 13, 17); their calling is a heavenly one, being from heaven (ch. i. 1) and to heaven (ch. ii. 10). Jesus is their “Apostle,” as having been sent into the world, as above set forth, from God; their “High Priest,” as implied, though not distinctly expressed, at the end of ch. ii., which led up to the idea. “Jesus” is added at the end in apposition, so as to fix attention on him, as the bearer of these titles, who was known by that name in the flesh. On the title “Apostle,” we may observe that, though it is nowhere else in the New Testament applied to Christ, yet its idea with respect to him is frequent both in this Epistle and elsewhere (cf. Luke iv. 43; ix. 48; x. 16; John xvii. 3, 18, etc.). The word *ḡmologya* (translated “confession;” in the A.V., “profession”) is generally used for the Christian’s avowal of his faith before men (cf. ch. iv. 14; x. 23; 2 Cor. ix. 13; 1 Tim. vi. 12). The genitive here depends on both the preceding substantives, its force probably being that Jesus, as Apostle and High Priest, is the object of our confession of faith. On Jesus, then, being such, the readers are called to fix earnestly their mental gaze, and in doing so take further note of his superiority to Moses, which is the subject of what follows.

Ver. 2.—Who was faithful (or, as being faithful) to him that appointed (literally, made) him, as also Moses was in all his house. The reference is to what was said of Moses (Numb. xii. 7), “My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house,” and serves aptly to introduce the intended comparison of Christ with him. In respect of faithfulness to him who constituted him in his office, Christ resembles Moses; in respect to his office itself, it is to be shown that he is far above him. Observe (1) that “his house” means God’s house, as is plain from the text cited, i.e. the house of him who appointed him; (2) that “in all his house” has reference to Moses only, not to Christ; for the main point of what follows is that Christ is over God’s house, not in it, as Moses was. As to the verb *ποθέσθαι* (translated in A.V. “appointed”), it may have been suggested by 1 Sam. xii. 6, where the LXX. reads *Κόμης δὲ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τῷ Ἀσάφῳ*, the Hebrew verb being *רָצָה*, which seems to mean in this

case “constitute,” not “create” (so Gesenius). The preceding words, *ἀνέστηλον καὶ ἀρχιερεῖα*, though it is not necessary to supply them as understood, may be taken here to rule the meaning of *ποθέσθαι* (cf. for a similar use of the verb without a second accusative following, Mark iii. 14, καὶ ἐποίησε δάδῃκα. Thus the Arian inference from the word, that Christ is represented as a creature, is groundless. Nor need reference be supposed to his human birth or conception, the *temporalis generatio* of the man Jesus (Athanasius, Ambrose, and other Fathers). Certainly not to his eternal generation (as Bleek and Lünemann); such reference is foreign to the idea of the passage; nor could the word *ποθεῖν* with any propriety be so used.

Ver. 3.—For of more glory than Moses hath this man (so A.V. for οὗτος, supplying “man,” though it is to be observed that the *humanity* of the person spoken of is not expressed in the original) been counted worthy (*ἡξίωται*: cf. Luke vii. 7; 1 Tim. v. 17; ch. x. 24; 2 Thess. i. 11), by so much as more honour than the house hath he that built (or, established) it. Here the account of Christ’s superiority to Moses begins. On the several expressions used we remark: (1) The initiatory γὰρ connects the sentence logically with *κατανοήσατε* in ver. 1, and thus retains its usual sense of “for.” (2) The form of comparison in the Greek, *πλεονος παρὰ*, is the same as in ch. i. 4, where the account of Christ’s superiority to angels began (on which see *supra*). (3) The “glory” (*δόξα*) here assigned to Christ is the “glory and honour” spoken of above as attained by him in consequence of his human obedience (cf. ch. ii. 9, “because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour”). This, rather than “the glory he had with the Father before the world was” (John xvii. 5), is suggested by the word *ἡξίωται*, as well as by the drift of the preceding chapters. We may suppose also a reference, in contrast, to the transitory “glory” on the countenance of Moses (*ἡ καταργουμένη*), which is contrasted (2 Cor. iii.) with the *ὑπερβαλλούση δόξα* in Christ. We observe, further, that in the latter part of the verse *τιμὴ* is substituted for *δόξα*, as more suitable to the mundane comparison of a house and its builder. (4) *Κατασκεύησεν* may include the idea of fitting up and furnishing a house as well as building it. But what is the drift of the intended argument? It is usual, with the Fathers generally, to suppose that Christ (*οὗτος*) is intended to be denoted as the Builder or Establisher of the house in which Moses was a servant, and that the argument is that he, as such, is necessarily greater than the servant, who was but a part of the

house, or household, thus established. *Oikos*, it is to be observed, may include in its meaning the *familia*, as well as the house itself, as *κατασκευαίειν* may include the idea of constituting the whole establishment (cf. *infra*, "whose house we are"). Among moderns, Hofmann and Delitzsch deny this identification of *δ κατασκευάσας* with *αὐτός*: against which there are the following reasons: (1) The Son has not been represented so far in the Epistle as the *originator* of the economy of redemption. Notwithstanding distinct intimations of his eternal pre-existent Deity (as in ch. i. 1, 2, 10), it has been as the Messiah, the Apostle and High Priest, manifested in time, and passing through humanity to glory, that he has been regarded in the preceding argument. Nor is there any proof here adduced of his being the *Builder* of the "house," so as to justify the conclusion on this ground of his glory being greater than that of Moses. (2) The word *ἡξιέρα* ("has been counted worthy of") suggests (as has been already remarked) reference to the glory won by him, "on account of the suffering of death," rather than to his pristine glory as the Divine Builder. (3) Elsewhere in the New Testament, when the Church is referred to under the figure of a house, it is spoken of as *God's* building (cf. ch. x. 21; 1 Tim. iii. 15; 1 Cor. iii. 9, 16; 2 Cor. vi. 16; Eph. ii. 22; 1 Pet. iv. 17; ii. 5). It is never spoken of as *Christ's*.¹ (4) The wording of ver. 3 does not necessitate the identification of *δ κατασκευάσας* with *αὐτός*. *Καθ' ὅσον* means "so far as;" it implies only that the glory of Christ is greater than that of Moses, *in proportion as* the honour of the builder is greater than that of the house. (5) The identification increases the difficulty of understanding the relevance to the argument of ver. 4, of which more will be said presently. Taking, then, *δ κατασκευάσας* to denote God the Father, we may state the argument thus: God is the Builder, or Founder, of his own house. Christ has been already shown to be his Son, associated with him in dignity and power, and, as such, Lord over his Father's house. Moses, on the other hand, as appears from Numb. xii. 7, was but a servant in God's house. As, then, the Founder is to the house, so is the Son and Lord to a servant in it; the Son partaking of the glory of the Founder; the servant only of that of the house in which he serves. According to this view of the argument, the

premises have been established, and the conclusion follows; the relation of Christ to the Builder of the house has been set forth in the preceding chapter, and may be now assumed; that of Moses is sufficiently shown by the quotation from the Pentateuch. Thus also vers. 5 and 6 are found to carry out naturally the idea here introduced, instead of unexpectedly starting a different one.

Ver. 4.—For every house is builded (or, *established*) by some one; but he that built (or, *established*) all things is God. Of the second clause of this verse "God" is rightly taken by modern commentators as the subject, not the predicate, though the Fathers generally take it otherwise. Thus Theodoret, regarding *δ πάντα κατασκευάσας* as a designation of Christ, views this clause as an assertion of his Deity on the ground of his being the Founder of all things. But this view introduces an idea out of keeping with the argument, and especially with the preceding expression, "faithful to him who appointed him," in which Christ, in his office as the Christ, is distinguished from the Creator of all, who appointed him to that office. The verse seems to be interposed in elucidation of the preceding *δ κατασκευάσας αὐτός*, to make it clear that the Founder of the house spoken of is God himself, and thus to give full effect to the proportionate glory of Christ in comparison with that of Moses. Thus: the glory of Christ is greater than that of Moses by so much as the honour of the founder of a house is greater than that of the house;—of the founder, we say; for every house has some founder: but God is the original Founder of all things, and therefore of necessity the Founder of this house of his own in which Moses was a servant. The verse, thus interpreted, seems (as intimated above) to fall in with the train of thought more naturally than it can be shown to do if Christ is regarded as the Builder. Possibly "all things" may be purposely used to denote the house itself over which Christ, as Son, is Lord. For, though the expression seems too wide for the limited house in which Moses was a servant, it is not so for the expanded and consummated house over which Christ in glory reigns; cf. ch. i. 2, "Whom he appointed Heir of *all things*;" and ch. ii. 8, "Thou hast put *all things* in subjection under his feet;" the last being said in especial connection with the "glory and honour" wherewith Christ "has been counted worthy" to be crowned. It is not necessary to confine the meaning of "God's house" to the Mosaic dispensation, or to assign to it (as some have done) two separate meanings in the cases of Moses and of Christ. It may be regarded as a comprehen-

¹ Our Lord's own words (Matt. xvi. 18), "upon this rock I will build my Church," may be quoted as an exception. But still the fact remains that elsewhere, when the Church is spoken of as a *house*, the word used for the builder is "God."

sive term, including in its general meaning the Law, the gospel, and the final consummation—the whole dispensation of redemption, beginning with the Law, and completed at the second advent. Moses held office in its early stage, and there only as a servant; in its ultimate development it comprises “all things,” and over “all things,” thus comprised, Christ, as Son, has been shown to be by inheritance absolute Lord.

VER. 5, 6.—And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were afterwards to be spoken; but Christ, as Son over his house. We have already anticipated the explanation of this passage, which, according to the view taken above, is a setting forth of the distinction between Christ and Moses intended from the first; that of one being “Son over,” the other but “servant in,” the house of God. The rendering of the A.V., “his own house,” in ver. 6, where Christ is spoken of, is not justifiable. It is true that we have no means of knowing whether *αὐτοῦ* or *αὐτοῦ* was intended, and that even *αὐτοῦ* might, according to the usage of Hellenistic Greek, refer to Christ; but if the writer had so intended it, he might easily have avoided ambiguity by writing *αὐτοῦ*, etc. He has not done so; and, therefore, it is most natural to take “his house” in the same sense throughout the passage; viz. as “God’s house,” referred to in Numb. xii. 7, whence the expression is taken. We observe further that “the things that were afterwards to be spoken (*τῶν λαληθησομένων*)” must be taken as denoting the future “speaking” of God to man “in his Son” (cf. ch. i. 1); not, as some interpret, the speaking through Moses himself in the Law. Moses was inferior to Christ, not only in respect to his personal position as a servant, but also in respect to his work as such; which was only to testify beforehand, typically and prophetically, to a fuller revelation to come. Whose house we are. Here begins the transition to the warning intended when the “holy brethren” were first called on to “consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession,” who has now been seen to be so much greater than Moses. We Christians constitute this completed “house of God,” over which Christ reigns as Son; if only warned by the example of the Israelites under Moses, we forfeit not our higher calling. This condition is expressed by *ἰφ* we hold fast the confidence (or, our confidence) and the rejoicing (rather, boast) of the (i.e. our) hope firm unto the end. *παρρησία* (often rendered “boldness;” see below, ch. iv. 16; x. 19, 85) is the confidence felt by assured believers; *καύχημα* is the boast thereupon ensuing. This word (as also *καυχᾶσθαι*) is often used by St. Paul (cf. Rom. iv. 2; v.

2; 1 Cor. v. 6; ix. 15; 2 Cor. i. 14; v. 12; ix. 8; Gal. vi. 4; Phil. i. 26; ii. 16). Its proper meaning is not (as is by many supposed) the *materies gloriandi*, but the uttered boast itself (see note on 1 Cor. v. 6, in the ‘Speaker’s Commentary’). The concluding words, *μέχρι τέλους βεβαίως*, are omitted in the Codex Vatican, and, notwithstanding the preponderance of authority in their favour, may have been interpolated (as is supposed by Mill, Tischendorf, Alford, and Delitzsch) from ver. 14, especially as the reading is not *βεβαίως*, so as to agree with the substantive immediately preceding, but *βεβαίως*, as in ver. 14.

VER. 7—11.—Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. The warning, thus led up to, is now introduced by a long quotation from Ps. xcv., which is cited at length, because the writer is about to dwell on its whole significance in the remainder of this and also in the succeeding chapter. The warning is connected by *ὅθεν* with the conclusion of ver. 6. Since our continuing to be God’s house is on the condition of our steadfastness, therefore beware of failing, as the Israelites referred to by the psalmist did. With regard to the construction of the passage, there is some difficulty in discovering the apodosis to the initiatory *καθὼς* (“as saith the Holy Ghost”). It seems best to suppose one understood, being suggested by “harden not your hearts,” which occurs in the midst of the quotation. Sentences thus grammatically incomplete are in the style of St. Paul. Otherwise the apodosis must be found in *βλέπετε* (ver. 12), the long intervening passage being parenthetical. It is, after all, only a question of grammatical construction; in any case the general meaning is clear. As to the successive clauses of the quotation from Ps. xcv. (vers. 7—11), it is to be observed that (1) “If ye will hear his voice” may probably mean in the Hebrew, “Oh that ye would hear his voice!” But the Greek of the LXX., cited in the Epistle, is capable of the same meaning. Here, again, the meaning of the particular phrase does not affect the drift of the passage. (2) “Harden not your hearts” expresses the obduration which ensues from resistance of grace. Elsewhere such judicial hardening is attributed to God; as when he is said to have hardened Pharaoh’s heart (cf. Isa. vi. 9, etc.; Matt. xiii. 13). The two modes of expression involve no difference of doctrine. It is God’s doing as being judicial; man’s as being due to his own perversity. As in the provocation, in the day of the temptation in the wilderness. Here *κατὰ τὴν ἡμέραν*, which is from the LXX., may mean “at the time of” (cf. Acts xvi. 25, *κατὰ τὸ μεσονύκτιον*), or “according

to," i.e. "after the manner of." The former agrees best with the Hebrew psalm, which has "As at Meribah, as on the day of Massah in the wilderness," referring to the two places called by these names from what occurred there, when the people murmured for want of water. The first occurrence was at Rephidim, in the wilderness of Sin, at the commencement of the wandering (Exod. xvii. 1—8); the second was in the wilderness of Zin, near Kadesh, towards the end of the forty years (Numb. xx. 1—14). Both names are assigned to the former place in Exod. xvii. 7; but elsewhere they are distinguished (see Deut. xxxiii. 8). In the text, following the LXX., equivalents of the Hebrew names are given, Massah being rendered literally by *πειρασμός*: Meribah (equivalent to "strife") by the unusual word *παραπειρασμός*, which occurs only here and in the psalm, though the verb *παραπειράω* is common in the LXX. The root of the word being *πικρός* ("bitter"), it may possibly have been suggested by the occurrence at Marah (equivalent to "bitterness"), where there was also a murmuring about water (Exod. xv. 23), *πικρία* being the LXX. equivalent of Marah. (3) When (of in the sense of *δου*, as is common in the LXX. and New Testament) your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. In place of the reading of the Textus Receptus, *δοκιμασάν με* ("proved me"), which agrees with the LXX., the authority of manuscripts is in favour of *ἐν δοκιμασίᾳ*. This again, like the other variations of reading, is of no importance with regard to the meaning. But further, in the original Hebrew, and apparently in the LXX., "forty years" is connected with the clause that follows: "forty years long was I grieved," etc.; whereas, in the text, the interposition of *ἐν* at the beginning of ver. 10, necessitates its connection with "saw my works." It is possible that the writer of the Epistle intended a reference to the corresponding forty years from the manifestation of Christ to the destruction of Jerusalem, which were drawing to their close at the time of writing, and during which the Israelites of his day were trying God by their rejection of the gospel, or, in the case of some of the believers addressed, by their wavering allegiance to it. The supposition that this idea was in the writer's mind is supported by the fact that Jewish writers refer to the psalm as assigning forty years for the days of the Messiah (see reference in Bleek, Delitzsch, Alford, etc.). That the writer had an intention in his variation from the original is the more likely from his following it correctly afterwards in ver. 17. (4) As I swear in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest. The reference here is to Numb. xiv. 21, etc., be-

ginning with the Divine oath, "As truly as I live," which is again repeated in ver. 28. The occasion was not the murmuring either at Massah or at Meribah, but the general rebellion of the whole congregation after the return of the spies, betokening a universal spirit of *ἀπιστία* (cf. ver. 19). "If they shall enter (*εἰ εἰσέλθουσιν*)" is an elliptical form of oath, expressing strong negation.

Ver. 12.—Take heed (literally, see), brethren, lest haply there should be (literally, shall be) in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God. Here begins definitely the hortatory application of the warning of the ninety-fifth psalm. Its drift, to the end of the chapter, is: You, being called under the Son to a far higher position than your fathers under Moses were, but the retention of your position being, as theirs was, conditional on your faithfulness, see that you do not forfeit it, as some of you may be in danger of doing. That you may, if you are not careful, is shown by the very warning of the psalm, and by the example of your fathers, referred to in the psalm, all of whom, though called, failed of attainment through unbelief. It is implied all along that the "to-day" of the psalm includes the present day of grace, and points to a truer rest than that of Canaan, still offered to the faithful. But the full bringing out of this thought is reserved for the next chapter. On the language of ver. 12 we observe: (1) The same form of warning, *βλέπετε μή*, occurs *infra* ch. xii. 25, but then, suitably to the context, followed by a subjunctive. Here the future indicative which follows, *μήποτε ἔσται*, denotes a fact in the future, distinctly apprehended as possible (cf. Col. ii. 8). It had not ensued as yet, nor does the writer anticipate the probability of its being the case with all his readers; but in the state of feeling with regard to the gospel among the Hebrew Christians which the whole Epistle was intended to counteract, he sees ground for fearing it in the case of some. Their present wavering might result in apostasy. (2) It is not necessary to analyze the expression, "an evil heart of unbelief," so as to settle whether the evil heart is regarded as the result of unbelief, or unbelief of the evil heart; the main point to be observed is that unbelief is connected with moral culpability, as is implied further in ver. 13. The unbelief so condemned in Holy Scripture is not mere intellectual incapacity; it is condemned only so far as man is responsible for it on account of his own wilful perversity or carelessness. (3) The outcome of such "evil heart of unbelief," if allowed to become fixed and permanent, will be apostasy (*ἀρσσηναι*: cf. Luke viii. 13; 1 Tim. iv. 1) from "the living God," from him who is Eternal

Life and the Source of all life and salvation. The thought of the momentous consequence of the falling away of Christians after light enjoyed is prominent in the Epistle (see especially ch. vi. 4, etc.; x. 26, etc.). The expression, "the living God," further directs attention to the revelation of God in the Old Testament, in which he is continually so designated, and to the thought that it is the same God who has revealed himself finally in the Son. Addressing Hebrew Christians, the writer may mean to say, "In apostatizing from Christ you would be cutting yourselves off from the God of your whole ancestral faith." There may be an intended allusion, too, to the oath, already referred to, of Numb. xiv. 21, 28, the form of which in the original is, "As I live" (*ὡς ἐγὼ, λέγει Κύριος, LXX.*).

Ver. 13.—But exhort one another (literally, yourselves, as in Col. iii. 16, the idea being that of the responsibility of the believers themselves in keeping their own faith alive; the Church must keep itself from apostasy by the mutual admonitions of its members), day by day, so long as it is called To-day (i.e. while the "To-day," *τὸ σήμερον*, of the psalm is still called so, *καλεῖται*; while you are still living day by day within the limit of its meaning); lest any one of you be hardened (still referring to the warning of the psalm) by the deceitfulness of sin. Here again, as in ver. 12, the possible result of obdurate unbelief is distinctly traced to moral culpability. Sin is a deceiver (cf. Rom. vii. 11; Eph. iv. 22); it distorts the spiritual vision, causes us to take false views of things, and to lose our clear view of truth; and continued dalliance with sin may have its result in final obduracy, which, as above remarked, is our own doing as it comes of our sin, God's doing as it comes of his judgment. The sin contemplated in the case of the Hebrew Christians as not unlikely to have its result in obduracy was, not only imperfect appreciation of the true character of the gospel revelation, and consequent remissness in mutual admonition and attendance at Christian worship (ch. x. 25), but also, as a further consequence of such remissness, failure in the moral purity of life, the active charity, the disentanglement from the world, and the endurance of persecution, required of Christians. This appears from the earnest exhortations that follow afterwards against all such shortcomings (see especially ch. x. 19—26, 32—39; xii. 1—18; xiii. 1—19). It was especially by conscientious perseverance in the religious life that they might hope to keep their religious faith steadfast and unclouded to the end; in accordance with Christ's own saying, "If any man *will* do (*θέλη* *ποιεῖν*) his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

Ver. 14.—For we are become partakers (or, partners) of Christ, if only we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end. This is a repetition in another form of the assertion of our position as Christians, with the appended condition, in ver. 6. It is a question whether *μέτοχοι Χριστοῦ* means that we partake of Christ as being in communion with him, or that we are partakers with him of the glory he has won for us (cf. *συγκαλησόμενοι Χριστοῦ*, Rom. viii. 17). The first is undoubtedly the ordinary sense of *μέτοχος* with a genitive in classical Greek, and generally in the New Testament (cf. e.g. *infra*, ch. vi. 4, *Μετόχους Πνεύματος ἁγίου*), and is on this ground maintained by Bleek, Alford, and others; but in the LXX. *μέτοχος*, followed by a genitive, is as undoubtedly used for "partner" or "companion;" cf. Pa. cxix. 63, *Μέτοχος ἐγὼ εἰμι πάντων τῶν φοβουμένων σε*; Hos. iv. 17, *Μέτοχος εἰδέσθων*; and especially Pa. xlv. 7, *Μετόχους σου*, which has been already cited (ch. i. 9), and justifies, as it may have suggested, the expression in this sense here. Of also in the New Testament, Luke v. 7, where *μετόχος*, though without an expressed genitive following, occurs in the sense of "partner." Further, the second sense accords better than the first with the view of our relation to Christ so far set forth in the Epistle. (2) On the word *ἐκδοταίς* (translated "confidence"), see what was said under ch. i. 3. All the ancient interpreters understood it here in the same general sense as in the former passage—that of *substance* or *subsistence*, either as denoting our subsistence as members of Christ, or our faith regarded as the substance of our Christian life, or with other modifications of the general meaning. Modern commentators agree in understanding merely the sense in which the word is found to be commonly used by the Alexandrian writers—that of *confidence*, derived from the physical conception of a firm foundation. It thus corresponds with the *παῖσις* of ver. 6. (3) "The beginning" (*τὴν ἀρχήν*) of this confidence refers to the earlier stage of the experiences of the Hebrew Christians, before their faith had shown any signs of wavering. There is no sufficient ground for Ebrard's inference from this expression, that the Epistle was not addressed to the Hebrew Church at large, which was the oldest of all Churches, but to "a circle of catechumens and neophytes." The phrase does not imply that the "beginning" was recent. All it need mean is, "Go on as you began." Further, we find, in ch. v. 12, a distinct intimation that the Church addressed is one of old standing. (4) "Unto the end" may have an individual reference to the end of life, or (the Church being addressed as a community expecting

the second advent) a general one to the close of the period of grace during which "it is called To-day."

Ver. 15.—While it is said, To-day, etc. Commentators have found unnecessary difficulty in determining the connection of *ἐν τῷ λέγεσθαι*. Many, taking the words as the beginning of a new sentence, have been at pains to discover the apodosis to them. Chrysostom, Grotius, Rosenmüller, and others find it in *φοβηθῶμεν ὁν*, ch. iv. 1; notwithstanding the *ὁν*, which seems evidently to introduce a new sentence, and the long parenthesis which, on this supposition, intervenes. Others find it in *μη σκληρύνετε* ("harden not your hearts"), in the middle of the citation of ver. 16, as if the writer of the Epistle adopted these words as his own. Delitzsch finds it in ver. 16, taken as an interrogation (*τῶς*, not *τῶς*: see below); thus: "When it is said, To-day . . . harden not your hearts as in the provocation, . . . who did provoke? Nay, did not all?" The *γὰρ* after *τῶς* he accounts for by its idiomatic use found in such passages as Acts viii. 31; xix. 85, conveying the sense of the English, "Why, who did provoke?" But this use of *γὰρ*, obvious in the texts adduced as parallel, would be forced here; the structure of the sentence does not easily lend itself to it. Still, this is the view taken by Tholuck, Bleek, De Wette, Lünemann, and others, as well as Delitzsch. But, notwithstanding such weighty support, difficulties are surely best avoided by taking *ἐν τῷ λέγεσθαι*, not as commencing a new sentence, but in connection with ver. 14 preceding, as it seems most natural to take it in the absence of any connecting particle to mark a new proposition. In this case the translation of the A.V. gives a fully satisfactory sense: "If we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end, while it is still being said, To-day," etc.; i.e. (as in ver. 13) "so long as it is called To-day." Ebrard, Alford, and others, taking the same view of the connection of the words, prefer the translation, "In that it is said." But the other seems more in accordance with the thought pervading the passage.

Vers. 16—19.—For who, when they heard, provoked? Nay, did not all those who came out of Egypt by Moses? That both these clauses are interrogative, and not as taken in the A.V., is now the prevalent view. The reasons for thus understanding them are (1) the analogy of the two following verses, both of which are interrogative, and in the first of which a question is similarly answered by putting another; and (2) the sense required. If the clauses were assertions, they could only be meant to express that the provocation was not universal, inas-

much as Joshua and Caleb (and it might be some few others) remained faithful. But to say this is unnecessary and irrelevant to the argument, the drift of which is to warn by "the example of unbelief;" and could *τῶς* ("some") possibly be used to denote the whole congregation with the exception of so few? It is to be observed, too, that the *ἀλλ' οὐ* at the beginning of the second clause is a proper Greek expression (equivalent to "nay") in the case of one question being answered by another (cf. Luke xvii. 7, 8). This verse, then (*γὰρ* retaining its usual sense of "for"), begins a proof, put in the form of a series of questions, of the preceding implied proposition, viz. that the retention of Christian privilege is dependent on perseverance, and that the privilege may be forfeited. In order to show this fully, the history of Numb. xiv., referred to in the warning of the psalm, is examined in connection with the successive expressions of the warning; and it thus appears that all who came out of Egypt by Moses (the small exception of the faithful spies being disregarded) provoked God, and so forfeited their privilege, and that the cause of their failure was sin, disobedience, and, at the root of all, unbelief. The conclusion is obvious that, as their example is held out in the psalm as a warning to us, we may, all or any of us, similarly forfeit our higher calling. That the psalm is a warning to us, the rest it points to being the rest won for us by Christ, is more fully shown in the following chapter. We observe how the leading words in Ps. xcv. are taken in succession in the three successive verses—*παρὰ κερταμὸς* in ver. 16, *προσέχθησα* in ver. 17, *ἔμοσα* in ver. 18—and how answers to the three questions suggested by these words are found in Numb. xiv.—to the first, in vers. 2, 10, etc., "all the children of Israel," "all the congregation;" to the second, in vers. 29—34, with citation of the words used; to the third, in vers. 21—24. It is to be observed, further, that it is not simply *ἀπιστία*, but its exhibition in actual sin and disobedience (*τοῖς ἀμαρτήσασιν, τοῖς ἀπειθήσασιν*), that is spoken of as calling forth the Divine wrath and the Divine oath. The second of the above words implies more than "believed not" (as in the A.V.); *ἀπειθεῖν* differs from *ἀπιστεῖν* in implying disobedience or contumacy. And this view of the case of the Israelites agrees entirely with the historical record, where an actual rebellion is spoken of—a refusal to go on with the work they had been called to. It suits also the application to the case of the Hebrew Christians, among whom (as has been said) it was not only wavering of faith, but, as its consequence, remissness in moral duty and in the facing of trial, of

which the writer of the Epistle had perceived symptoms, and on the ground of which he warns them to take heed lest growing indifference should be hardened into apostasy. But in both instances, as faith is the root of all virtue, so want of it

was the cause, and again the growing result, of moral decadence. And so the argument is summed up in the concluding verse, And we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*Consider Jesus.* The exhortation of this verse marks the transition from the first section of the treatise to those which follow. Its reference is both retrospective and prospective. Indeed, the whole Epistle says in effect, "Consider what is written herein concerning Jesus; for he is greater than the prophets, greater than the angels, greater than Moses and Joshua, greater than Aaron, and pre-eminent among the heroes of faith."

I. A DESCRIPTION OF CHRIST. 1. *The "Apostle" of the gospel.* Jesus, the Son of God (and no longer prophets or angels), is now the Divine Ambassador to men. God has sent him to us, as he sent Moses (Exod. iii.) to the ancient Israelites (ch. iii.; iv. 1—13). It is singularly appropriate that Christ, the *Sent of God*, should be called God's "Apostle." 2. *The "High Priest" of the Church.* As our Mediator, Jesus draws near to God for us. He expiates, propitiates, reconciles, and intercedes (ch. iv. 14—x. 18). Through Christ, as Apostle, God holds intercourse with us; and through Christ, as High Priest, we hold intercourse with God.

II. A DESCRIPTION OF CHRIST'S PEOPLE. 1. *"Holy brethren."* This phrase evidently looks back to ch. ii. 11 and following verses. Believers are so styled on account of their common oneness with Christ, their Sanctifier and elder Brother. 2. *"Partakers of a heavenly calling."* This refers to the sovereign gift of regeneration, and of the blessings flowing from it, which all believers have received. The "calling" is "heavenly," because it has come from heaven; it creates heaven within us; and it conducts to heaven. 3. *Confessors of Christ.* Jesus expects his people to make an open and proud avowal of attachment to him as their Teacher and Priest. Believers confess him by connecting themselves with his Church, by sitting at his table of communion, by defending his honour, by spreading his truth, and especially by reflecting his likeness in their lives.

III. A DUTY OF CHRIST'S PEOPLE TOWARDS HIM. Christianity centres in Christ; in fact, Christ himself is Christianity. Personal religion does not consist in any merely intellectual acceptance of gospel truth; it is a life of loving devotion to the living Saviour. How necessary, then, that we "consider Jesus," earnestly, intensely, habitually, and make the study of him the main interest and business of life! We must "consider" him: 1. *To know him.* We are saved through faith in Christ; but knowledge is necessary in order to faith. If we would know the Redeemer in his Person, natures, offices, and work, we must "consider" him. 2. *To love him.* A Christian is one who loves Christ; but this love will fill his heart only in so far as he gazes admiringly upon the God-Man, who loved him and gave himself for him. 3. *To serve him.* If we truly love Christ as our Saviour, this love will control and dominate our life. But, in order to know his will, our "eyes" must always "look unto the hand of our Master." 4. *To become like him.* Sanctification can be effected only by always "looking unto Jesus" for mercy and grace and aid, until we finally attain the prize of the heavenly calling.

CONCLUSION. This subject suggests a test of character. Do I belong to the holy brotherhood? Have I accepted the heavenly calling? Do I confess Christ with my lip and in my life? Is the contemplation of Jesus my most cherished desire?

Vers. 2—6.—*Christ greater than Moses.* It was a delicate thing to utter such a thought even to many of the Jews who had embraced Christianity, for the whole Hebrew nation guarded with intense jealousy the name and fame of Moses. But the writer acknowledges to the full the lofty dignity and splendid services of the ancient lawgiver, and then proceeds to show that Jesus Christ has been counted worthy of still greater honour.

I. CHRIST'S SIMILARITY TO MOSES. (Ver. 2.) The very fact of a comparison being instituted between Jesus and Moses reminds us of Moses' greatness. Moses had a romantic personal history; his character was adorned with the grandest gifts of grace and genius; and he accomplished an illustrious life-work. He was a type of Christ both in character and career. The Jews venerated him almost to idolatry as their deliverer, leader, lawgiver, prophet, and advocate with God. Now, Christ was "a Prophet like unto Moses" (Deut. xviii. 15). He is the Moses of the New Testament. Ver. 2 suggests points of resemblance between the two. 1. *Each introduced a new dispensation.* "The Law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The Jews were "baptized unto Moses;" Christians are "baptized into Christ." The writings of Moses are to the Old Testament Scriptures what the granite formation is to the other strata of the earth's crust; so the written life of Christ is the foundation of New Testament Scripture. 2. *Each was divinely commissioned and supported in his work.* Moses, with his marvellous gifts, was raised up and trained and called by Providence to his life-task; and so was Jesus. Moses enjoyed peculiarly intimate intercourse with God, for "the Lord knew him face to face;" and so did Jesus. 3. *Each was divinely recognized as "faithful."* Fidelity to duty is the crown and flower of character. "My servant Moses is faithful in all mine house" (Numb. xii. 7). "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matt. xvii. 5).

II. CHRIST'S SUPERIORITY TO MOSES. (Vers. 3—6.) It was right that the memory of the lawgiver should be cherished with profound veneration; but, behold, a greater than Moses is here. Jesus has merited still larger honour. 1. *Christ is the "Builder" of the Church; Moses was only one of the stones in it.* (Vers. 3, 4.) The Son of God, "through whom also he made the ages" (ch. i. 2), is the real Founder of every dispensation of religion. He redeemed the Old Testament Church, not less than the New, with his blood, and caused it to grow by his Spirit. Moses only introduced the Hebrew economy; it was God in Christ who founded it. Moses was a constituent member of the Jewish Church, i.e. a ransomed sinner, saved by grace like other men; a "living stone" built into the spiritual house by Christ the Master-BUILDER. 2. *Christ is a "Son" set "over God's house;" Moses was only a "servant" within it.* (Vers. 5, 6.) Moses ministered in the Church as a confidential house-steward, or honoured upperservant; but Christ entered it as its Master, to preside over it by virtue of his Divine sonship. The author has already expatiated on this theme in ch. i.; and surely Jesus, the Apostle of Christianity, is more renowned than Moses, seeing that he is the very Image of God, and the Lord of all the angels. 3. *Christ is the incarnate "Word of God;" Moses was only his forerunner.* (Ver. 5.) Moses bore "testimony" to "those things which were afterward to be spoken"—to the new and final revelation to be made at last, when God should speak "in his Son" (ch. i. 2). "Moses was the harbinger, Christ the illustrious Prince himself; the revelations of Moses were the faint twilight of the morning, those of Christ the full splendour of noonday; the institutions of Moses were the scaffolding, those of Christ the finished fabric of religious truth" (Lindsay).

CLOSING PRACTICAL REFLECTION. (Ver. 6.) If we remain perseveringly steadfast in our gospel faith, and joyful in our spiritual hope, we have therein the evidence that we ourselves belong to God's house, the Church.

Vers. 7—19.—Beware of unbelief. Eminent and honoured though Moses had been, the generation of Hebrews whom he led out of Egypt became unbelieving and disobedient, and were in consequence overtaken by a dreadful doom. So the writer of this Epistle, realizing the strong temptations to relapse into Judaism which beset the Hebrew Christians, warns them against the still more dreadful consequences of apostasy from discipleship to Jesus Christ.

I. A BEREFTING SPIRITUAL DANGER. It is that of losing our participation in God's house; or, more particularly, of: 1. *Present unbelief.* (Ver. 12.) Unbelief is distrust of God, want of faith in the Divine promise and providence, and especially refusal personally to confide in the Lord Jesus as "the Apostle and High Priest of our confession." Unbelief may either presume upon God's mercy, or despair of it, or neglect it. 2. *Growing hardness of heart.* (Ver. 8.) "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness;" and the heart also is the fountain of sin. Acts of refusal to listen to God's voice petrify into habits, so that the heart becomes the longer the more careless.

impenitent, and disobedient. 3. *Final apostasy.* (Ver. 12.) As acts produce habits, so habits form character. A human heart indurated by unbelief, and confirmed in moral insensibility, will lapse either into atheism, or immorality, or settled worldliness; and, unless Divine grace interpose, will for ever "fall away from the living God." This danger easily besets us all—much more easily than many professing Christians suspect. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

II. A STRIKING HISTORICAL WARNING. (Vers. 7—11.) This the apostle introduces in words borrowed from Ps. xcv., which describe the career of the Israelites of Moses' day, in the wilderness. They had, as a people, been: 1. *Highly privileged.* (Ver. 9.) As the result of the ten plagues of Egypt, and by means of their magnificent march through the Red Sea, they had been emancipated from slavery. They "saw God's works forty years," in the falling manna, in the water from the rock that followed them, in their raiment which did not wear out, and in the cloudy pillar which accompanied them on their journeys. Yet they were: 2. *Habitually faithless.* (Vers. 8, 9, 16.) They despised these abiding miracles, and demanded other signs as a condition of believing. They doubted and grumbled; they longed to return again to Egypt; they refused at God's command to go up to take possession of Canaan; and at last they fell into the idolatries of the heathen around. Zin, Rephidim, Taberah, Kadesh-barnea, and Shittim are names which remind us how the ransomed Jews did "always err in their heart." They were obstinate and unanimous in their apostasy (vers. 16, 17). So they were: 3. *Hopelessly doomed.* (Vers. 11, 17—19.) The words of the psalm, "I swear in my wrath," reflect the intensity and depth of the Divine displeasure; and the language borrowed from the history, "whose carcases fell in the wilderness" (Numb. xiv. 29, 32), suggests the deep misery of the retribution which fell upon that entire generation. But a ruin still more fearful shall be the portion of all who refuse or despise the gospel spoken by our Lord Jesus, the "Apostle" greater than Moses.

III. AN EARNEST PRACTICAL COUNSEL. "Take heed, brethren" (ver. 12). This exhortation is, in fact, the key-note of the whole Epistle; it is the chord which rules the strain. While the grace of God does not allow any real Christian to backslide irretrievably, he preserves his people from apostasy by the use of means suited to their rational and moral nature. So, here, the Holy Spirit exhorts every individual believer (ver. 12) to "take heed." If we would not "fall away from the living God," we must: 1. "*Hear his voice.*" (Vers. 7, 15.) That voice speaks to us now in the sweet and glorious gospel, and tells us of far grander "works" than those which were wrought for ancient Israel. "God hath spoken unto us in his Son" (ch. i. 2). To obey his voice will at once soften and strengthen our hearts. It will make us large-hearted as well as tender-hearted. 2. "*Exhort one another.*" (Ver. 13.) Christians are associated in Church fellowship that they may promote one another's welfare. The Church is a spiritual mutual benefit society. Friendly counsel and admonition are a valuable safeguard against apostasy. Two considerations which should stimulate to this duty are mentioned: (1) the shortness of life; (2) the insidiousness of sin. 3. *Continue "firm unto the end."* (Ver. 14.) It is dangerous for a believer to rest satisfied with the consciousness of his original conversion; he ought to be constantly turning from sin to Christ. It is unwise for him to lay stress on past frames and feelings; he must cherish through life an always-fresh and living "confidence" in the Saviour—a faith which more and more certifies itself by the ripening "fruit of the Spirit." He must remain ever on his guard against unbelief. Only by persevering steadfastness will any one who has accepted the "heavenly calling" finally enter into the heavenly "rest."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*The sublimest contemplation.* "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling," etc.

I. THE CHARACTERIZATION OF CHRISTIANS. 1. *They are fraternal in relation.* "Brethren." These Hebrew Christians were brethren in a twofold sense to the writer of the Epistle—first, as being his kindred according to the flesh; and next, as being of the same religious faith. Every Christian is a member of a glorious brotherhood. We are brothers inasmuch as we have all one Father and one elder Brother; we are

animated by one Spirit; we are tending to one home, our "Father's house." Let us endeavour to realize this relationship, and to practically express its spirit. "Love the brotherhood." 2. *They are consecrated in character.* "Holy brethren." By applying to them the term "holy," the writer does not affirm that all those whom he was addressing were in a state of sinless purity. The adjective conveys two ideas—consecration and transformation. Christians are holy because they have consecrated themselves to the Lord, and are being transformed into moral resemblance to him.¹ 3. *They are exalted in privilege.* "Partakers of a heavenly calling." This calling "is the invitation given on the part of God and Christ to men, to come and partake of the blessings proffered" in the gospel. In two senses it is "a heavenly calling." (1) It is heavenly in its origin; a calling from heaven. The holy voices and gracious invitations are from above. All saving influences and impulses are from God. (2) It is heavenward in its end; a calling to heaven. Spiritual, sublime, eternal, heavenly, are the blessings to which we are called. It is "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The "partakers" of this calling are not those who have merely heard the call to gospel blessings, but those who have both heard and accepted that call.

II. THE CHARACTERIZATION OF THE LORD AND SAVIOUR. 1. *He is "the Apostle of our confession."* There is here a comparison of Jesus with Moses. Moses was "sent" of God to be the emancipator, chieftain, and ruler of the Israelites (see Exod. iii. 10, 12, 14, 15). In this sense he was an apostle of God. Jesus Christ was the Sent of God (see John iii. 84; v. 36, 37; vi. 29; x. 36; xvii. 18). He was sent on a still grander mission of redemption (see Isa. lxi. 1—3). Moreover, the Jews designated the minister of the synagogue, who had the charge of its affairs and presided over them, an apostle. And in the verse following our text the writer goes on to speak of Jesus and Moses as each presiding over the affairs of a house. In this sense also our Lord is "the Apostle of our confession." He is sent, not only to emancipate, but also to rule over his Church; to be both "a Prince and a Saviour." 2. *He is "the High Priest of our confession."* Here the comparison is with Aaron. As Aaron was high priest of the Jews, and, as such, made expiation for the sins of the people, so our Saviour has made atonement for the sins of the world by the offering of himself in sacrifice. Through him we approach unto God. He maketh intercession for us. He pleads with us and in us and for us. Through him we shall rise to heaven. As the Apostle, he is the Representative of God to men; as the High Priest, he is the Representative of men with God. 3. *He is Jesus.* There is perhaps a reference here to Joshua, the great general of the Israelites, who led them into the promised land. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." How great, then, is our Lord and Saviour!

III. THE ATTITUDE WHICH CHRISTIANS SHOULD MAINTAIN TOWARDS THEIR LORD AND SAVIOUR. "Wherefore, holy brethren . . . consider the Apostle and High Priest," etc. 1. *The argument.* "Wherefore," i.e. because we have in Jesus such "a merciful and faithful High Priest," such a mighty and gracious Helper, we should attentively consider him. And such consideration would be likely to strengthen the Christian faith of any who were in danger of falling back into Judaism; for they would find him a greater Apostle than Moses, a greater High Priest than Aaron, a greater "Captain of salvation" than Joshua. The great principle is this, that the greatest safeguard against weariness, discouragement, and apostasy is an earnest consideration of Jesus; a believing, steadfast, looking unto him. 2. *The exercise.* "Consider the Apostle," etc. Contemplate him as "the Apostle of our confession." How much greater is he than Moses! Moses did not lead the people into the promised land, or even enter therein himself; but Jesus has entered heaven as our Forerunner, has led multitudes into its blessedness, will lead all his people there. Contemplate him as "the High Priest of our confession." How much greater is he than Aaron! Aaron's priesthood was imperfect, typical, preparatory; but our Lord's is gloriously perfect. By his sacrifice he has made full atonement; his intercession is divinely efficacious. Contemplate him as our Saviour, "Jesus." He is "mighty to save;" "able to save to the uttermost," etc. Here is the sublimest contemplation. In weakness and weariness consider him, and you will be strengthened and animated. In darkness consider him, and the night will shine even as the day. In sin consider him, and you will seek and obtain forgiveness. In sorrow consider him, and the troubled heart will grow calm and restful. In death consider him, and his rod

¹ See our notes on ch. ii. 11.

and staff will comfort you, and he himself will lead you through its dark portals into the joys and glories of heaven. Let this be our constant attitude—"looking unto Jesus."—W. J.

Ver. 6.—*The Church, God's temple.* "But Christ as a Son over his house; whose house are we," etc. Observe—

I. THE CHURCH IS THE TEMPLE OF GOD. It is here designated "his house." And St. Paul speaks of "the house of God, which is the Church of the living God." Individual Christians are spoken of as temples of God (1 Cor. iii. 16). And the whole company of Christians are spoken of as "a holy temple" (Eph. ii. 20—22), and "a spiritual house" (1 Pet. ii. 5). The figure suggests several ideas; e.g.: 1. *Design for its construction.* The tabernacle was built and furnished by Moses in accordance with minute directions from God. "Look that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount" (Exod. xxv.). Solomon erected and furnished the temple from plans which he received from his father David, and for the making of which David was divinely instructed. "All this, said David, the Lord made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern" (1 Chron. xxviii. 11—19). And of the sublime spiritual temple God himself is the great Architect. This spiritual house, from its foundation to its topstone, is being built after the Divine plan. Hence, we may infer, it will be strong and stable, sublime and beautiful, etc. 2. *Cohesion of its several portions.* This glorious edifice is "fitly framed together." There is unity of design, unity of construction, etc. The Church of Christ is one in a unity more true and deep than that of any outward forms, or symbols, or organizations. It is one in its filial relation to the great Father, in its faith in the redeeming Son, as being inhabited by the Holy Spirit, and as consecrated to the glorious cause of Christ. In these respects all true Christians are one. 3. *Inhabitation by God.* God dwelt in symbol in the tabernacle of Moses and in the temple of Solomon. The sacred Shechinah was there in the holy of holies. By his Spirit he dwells in every Christian. "Ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." He dwells also in the Church as a whole. In Christ Jesus "ye are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit."

II. CHRIST IS THE BUILDER OF THIS TEMPLE. In ver. 8 he is spoken of as "he that built the house." "On this rock," said he, "I will build my Church." Christians "are his workmanship;" they "are God's building." "The Lord added to the Church daily those that were being saved." All other labourers on the glorious edifice work under him. He allots them their respective duties, appoints them their sphere of operation, sustains them in their work, and crowns their work with success. Passing to another figure, Paul "planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."

III. CHRIST IS THE LORD OF THIS TEMPLE. Our text teaches that Christ as a Son is over this house of God. He is "Head over all things to the Church" (Eph. i. 22). "The Church is subject to Christ" (Eph. v. 23, 24). "He is the Head of the body, the Church . . . that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." "One is your Master, even the Christ." His authority is supreme in the Church, higher than that of conferences or councils, synods or convocations, archbishops or popes; and it should be recognized as such and loyally obeyed. He ordained the laws of the Church; he instituted its sacraments, etc.

IV. PERSONAL INCORPORATION IN THIS TEMPLE IS CONDITIONAL. "Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence," etc. Here are two conditions: 1. *The maintenance of assured Christian confidence.* This confidence, or boldness, as Ebrard says, "is nothing else than the *pietas* itself in its most direct and most practical expression, manifesting itself as the inward power of the peace which dwells in the heart, in circumstances of outward difficulty. . . . It denotes that joyful boldness which flows from within and is victorious over unfavourable circumstances; it is joyfulness felt in situations in which others would despair; hence it is the immediate fruit of the objective peace obtained with God through the atonement." 2. *The maintenance of their exultant hope.* "If we hold fast the . . . glorifying of our hope." Here also Ebrard's note is excellent. "The Jews boasted of their descent from Abraham (John viii.), of their temple and priesthood, of their being the chosen people of God—all palpable and manifest advantages. The poor Christians had nothing of the kind in which they could glory.

Regarded by the Gentiles as a Jewish sect, by the Jews as apostates from the people of Israel, forming no state, no people, without rulers, without a head except One who was crucified, the refuse and offscouring of the people, they had nothing of which to boast but the glory which they hoped to receive." But how splendid a hope was theirs!—the hope of perfect holiness and of perfect blessedness. And such a hope is ours. Let us, then, "hold fast our confidence and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end."—W. J.

Vers. 7, 8.—*On hearing God's voice.* "The Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." *Introduction.* The witness of the New Testament to the Divine inspiration of the Old. "The Holy Ghost saith" (Pa. xcv. 7—11). We have in the text—

I. A GREAT FACT IMPLIED. That God speaks to man. The "if" does not indicate uncertainty as to the Divine voice, but as to man's attention to this voice. There is no question as to whether God will speak to man or not, but whether man will heed his communications. Notice: 1. *The object for which God speaks to man.* This object is that man may be saved. The Divine voice proclaims and proffers a "great salvation," and publishes redemptive truth to man. 2. *The organs by which he speaks to man.* (1) By the sacred Scriptures, and especially in the life and teachings of his Son, Jesus Christ, as recorded therein. "God . . . hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son." (2) By Christian ministries, especially the preaching of his gospel. "We are ambassadors on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us," etc. (2 Cor. v. 20). (3) By the voice of our conscience. In its approbation of the right and its condemnation of the wrong, God speaks to us. (4) By the events of his providence. (5) By the influences of his holy Spirit. He speaks within the soul of man. He imparts emphasis and energy to the other voices by which God addresses us. 3. *The frequency with which he speaks to man.* Our text implies that he speaks to us daily. And surely by some one or more of these voices, every day he addresses to us some prohibition or persuasion, some caution or encouragement, some precept or promise, some invitation or warning. Were our susceptibility to Divine influences greater, we should ever hear the utterances of the Divine voice.

II. A MOMENTOUS DUTY EXPRESSED. Our duty is to hear God's voice. Consider: 1. *The signification of hearing God's voice.* It is not mere hearing that is meant here, but earnest attention to God's voice, hearty belief in his communications, and willing obedience to his commands. 2. *The season for hearing God's voice.* "To-day;" i.e. now. (1) Because life is uncertain. "Ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life?" etc. (Jas. iv. 14). (2) Because procrastination is perilous. The postponement of our duty to-day facilitates a further postponement of it to-morrow. (3) Because it is a present duty, and to defer the performance of it is, therefore, sinful. We ought to attend to God's voice now. The urgency of this duty is suggested in the text. In the psalm from which it is quoted, our text "is virtually the expression of a wish, 'To-day if ye will but hearken to his voice!'" or, "Oh that ye might this day hearken to his voice!" The pathos and earnestness which the Holy Ghost puts into this wish suggests the deep importance of the duty; cf. Pa. lxxxi. 13, "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me!" etc.

III. A SOLEMN CAUTION GIVEN. "Harden not your hearts." The sapling is pliant; it may be bent and trained as to the direction and form of its growth. The full-grown tree is fixed in form, firm in texture, and unbending in its resistance; it is hardened. Men harden their hearts by disregarding the voice of God, by not recognizing the authority of their consciences, by postponing the performance of religious duties, by neglecting the great salvation, and by practically despising or resisting the Holy Spirit of God. St. Paul speaks of men who were "alienated from the life of God, because of the hardening of their heart," and "who being past feeling" had abandoned themselves to persistent and active wickedness. For such moral insensibility what hope remains? "Oh that ye might this day hearken to his voice!"—W. J.

Ver. 12.—*Apostasy.* "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you," etc. Our text leads us to consider—

I. APOSTASY IN ITS NATURE. "Departing from the living God." 1. *This departure*

is not local. In this respect separation from the Divine presence is impossible. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" etc. (Ps. cxxxix. 7—12). 2. *This departure is not theological.* The corruption of a man's creed will almost certainly be followed by deterioration of his character and conduct; yet a man may retain his hold of a true creed, and at the same time be falling away from the living God. 3. *This departure is not ecclesiastical.* Membership and activity in the visible Church of Christ may be fully maintained even while one is departing from God. Apostasy may exist in the heart long before it is manifested in action. 4. *This departure is spiritual.* It is a falling away from the living God in sympathy and in service. "They do alway err in their heart" (ver. 10). It is the decline of love and loyalty to God.

II. APOSTASY IN ITS ROOT. "An evil heart of unbelief." Confidence in God is essential to union with him or love to him. Let any one doubt God's existence or character, that he is wise and righteous and good, and that man's sympathy with God will speedily perish. His apostasy has already begun. Doubt of our friends will be the death of our friendship. And unbelief towards God must lead to spiritual alienation from him, and that alienation persisted in must issue in spiritual death. It is of the utmost importance that we firmly grasp the truth that *this unbelief is not intellectual, but moral*; it is not the doubt of the inquiring mind, but of the wandering heart. It is the faith of the heart that unites man with God. "If thou shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness," etc. It is the unbelief of the heart that separates man from God. "An evil heart of unbelief."

III. APOSTASY IN ITS PERIL. There is the danger of: 1. *Drifting further away from God.* It is impossible for us to remain stationary in our relation to him. We are ever either drawing nearer to him or departing further from him. In this "falling away from the living God" the soul falls lower and lower. 2. *Deprivation of spiritual blessings.* Unbelief excludes the soul from the rest of God. The peace of the forgiveness of sins, the rest and joy of affections centred in God, the comfort of Christian hope, and the blessedness of true progress, are forfeited by the unbeliever. 3. *The death of the soul.* The soul lives only as it is united with God, and its union with him is impossible apart from faith in him. "Departing from the living God," its death is inevitable. What a death is that! A man in whom truth and trust, purity and love, righteousness and reverence, moral effort and aspiration, are extinct. What a death!

IV. APOSTASY IN ITS PREVENTION. "Take heed, brethren," etc. 1. *Guard against the insidious advances of unbelief.* "Watch and pray," etc. 2. *Seek the increase of your faith in God and of your love to him.* A nearer approach to God is the surest preventive of apostasy from him.

CONCLUSION. Is "thy heart right in the sight of God"? "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."—W. J.

Ver. 13.—*An awful peril and an inspired preventive.* "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day," etc. We discover in these words—

I. AN AWFUL PERIL. "Lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." The danger is that of growing into a condition of moral obduracy, of becoming "past feeling." The greatness of this peril largely arises from two facts. 1. *That this condition is generally reached gradually.* Men do not become hardened in sin by one act of wickedness. Moral insensibility is the result of a process. The progress may sometimes be distinctly traced. (1) The hardening of the will against certain Divine commands, as in the case of Pharaoh (Exod. v. 2). The refusal to do a manifest duty. (2) The hardening of the entire moral disposition in sin. In this stage the struggle against temptation to sin is renounced, and the effort to be and to do what is true and right is given up (cf. Eph. iv. 18, 19). (3) The hardening of the heart against the influences of Divine grace. In this stage the offers of the gospel are rejected; unbelief becomes positive and active¹ (cf. Acts vii. 51). How inexpressibly terrible is such a condition of soul! 2. *That this condition is generally reached insidiously.* "Hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Sin never approaches the soul in its true aspect. It

¹ Suggested by Ebrard, *in loc.*

assumes attractive disguises; it propounds plausible reasons; it exhibits fascinating yet fictitious prospects. For example, to those who are "not far from the kingdom of God," and who are almost entirely decided to serve him heartily and wholly, the deceitful and dangerous suggestion is presented that to-morrow will be more favourable in circumstances than to-day for beginning a decided Christian life, that a more "convenient season" for genuine personal religion will speedily arrive. And so the holy decision and consecration are deferred; procrastination becomes habitual; the heart hardens in procrastination. Again, to the Christian the temptation to unbelief is never presented in its real character, or it would be rejected immediately and decisively. It approaches the heart in fair forms, and with a show of reasonableness and righteousness. Thus, if a man be not on his guard, the hardening process will have begun ere he is aware of it. Hence the awful peril.

II. AN INSPIRED PREVENTIVE. "Exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day." 1. *The nature of this preventive.* "Exhort one another." The word translated "exhort" indicates two exercises. (1) Admonition of each other. Stuart translates, "Admonish one another." Let Christians warn each other when they detect impending dangers. (2) Encouragement of each other. Let Christians endeavour to inspire their disheartened brethren with new hopes, to comfort their troubled brethren with Christian consolations. "Wherefore, lift up the hands that hang down," etc. (ch. xii. 12, 13). Christians, being children of one Father, disciples of one Master, members of one great community, exposed to similar perils, sustained by similar influences, and inspired by common hopes, ought thus to "exhort one another." Moreover, there is a preventive mentioned in the preceding verse against this dread peril which each one must exercise for himself. "Take heed." Be watchful, etc. 2. *The season for the exercise of this preventive.* "Exhort one another daily," or, "day by day." Mutual oversight and help should be continuous. Watchfulness and prayer and Christian effort must not be irregular or intermittent, but steady and constant; not occasional exercises, but abiding dispositions. 3. *The limit to the exercise of this preventive.* "While it is called To-day." This may mean while our present form of life shall last; as in our Lord's words, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day," etc. Or it may mean while the day of grace continues. Adopting either interpretation, the season for this mutual exhortation is limited and uncertain. "We have but an uncertain season for the due performance of most certain duties; how long it will be called To-day, we know not; the day of life is uncertain, and so is the day of the gospel; a summer's day for clearness, a winter's day for shortness; our working day is a wasting day." Let the solemn gravity of the peril lead each of us to a diligent use of the Heaven-inspired preventive.—W. J.

Ver. 19.—*The dread disability.* "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." Our text—

I. REFUTES SEVERAL ASSIGNED REASONS FOR MAN'S FAILURE TO ATTAIN SALVATION. If any one does not enter the spiritual rest which God has graciously provided for man, it is: 1. *Not by reason of anything in the purposes or predestinations of God.* His purposes are the purposes of a Being of perfect righteousness, and of infinite wisdom and love. He could not ordain an evil thing, or have any intentions which are inimical to the well-being of his creatures; for he is God—the Supremely Good (cf. Ezek. xxxiii. 11; 1 Tim. ii. 4—6). 2. *Not by reason of any deficiency in God's redemptive provisions.* These are abundant, inexhaustible, and entirely free. The atonement of Jesus Christ, which is perfectly adapted to reconcile man to God, is as efficacious for a million hearts as it is for one (cf. Isa. lv. 1, 2, 6, 7; Matt. xxii. 1—10; Luke xiv. 16—23; John iii. 14—17; Rev. xxii. 17). 3. *Not by reason of any inability to accept God's redemptive provisions.* The condition upon which salvation is appropriated by man is sincere and hearty faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Every sane man can comply with this condition if he will. 4. *Not by reason of any deficiency of evidences for the essential truths of Christianity.* The Christian religion is founded upon facts, which are as well attested as any facts of history.

II. AFFIRMS THE TRUE REASON FOR MAN'S FAILURE TO ATTAIN SALVATION. "They were not able to enter in because of unbelief." This unbelief is not intellectual or theoretical, but practical, and resulting in disobedience. The unbelief of the Israelites

here spoken of totally unfitted them for entering the promised land (see Num. xiv. 1—4, 22, 23, 28—35). Their unbelief had stripped them of hope and of courage, and reduced them to humiliating despondency and cowardice. No one can enter upon any worthy inheritance without the exercise of faith. For the discovery of new countries, for the exploration of unknown lands, for the carrying out of great reformatory or ameliorations, for the perfecting of beneficent inventions, for the accomplishment of every worthy and noble enterprise, the possession and exercise of faith is indispensable. The attainment of salvation is impossible apart from faith. Unbelief it is which excludes men from the true rest of the soul. They are "not able to enter in because of unbelief." This is the dread disability, the unwillingness to heartily and practically believe in Jesus Christ. "Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life." If any man is not saved, he alone is to blame. He is diseased, yet he turns aside from the remedy. He is condemned, yet he refuses to accept the offered pardon. He is self-destroyed.—W. J.

Vers. 1—8.—*The superiority of Christ to Moses the reason why they should cleave to Christ.* The writer has met the objection to Christianity raised by the supposed want of dignity in its Founder, as opposed to the greatness of the angels through whom the old dispensation was said to be "ordained." He proceeds to deal with another objection. "The Law was ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator;" but, he says, however great this mediator was, Christ is greater still. Subject—*The superiority of Christ to Moses the reason why they should cleave to Christ.*

I. ALL THAT MOSES WAS TO GOD'S PEOPLE, CHRIST IS. A very delicate subject. To exhibit Moses in a subordinate position was to touch a point on which the Hebrews were very sensitive. The writer, therefore, begins by simply speaking of Christ as, at least, on a level with Moses. 1. *Moses and Christ were successively the divinely appointed heads of Israel.* "House" equivalent to "household." Both Moses and Christ successively presided over, administered the affairs of, the household of God on earth. The New Testament often draws a parallel in some kind between Moses and Christ: "As Moses lifted," etc.; "The Law was given by," etc.; "They sing the song of Moses," etc. *This parallel is more sharply drawn in the affirmation that Moses and Christ occupied this position in the twofold capacity of "Apostle and High Priest."* The two aspects of the mediatorial position: an apostle is one sent of God to represent him to the people, and the high priest is one appointed to represent the people before God. Moses fulfilled this dual position with regard to Israel; but the Hebrews had lost nothing in advancing from him to Christ, for they had all this in Jesus. 2. *Moses and Christ were both faithful in their fulfilment of the Divine appointment.* Not, "Each was personally faithful," but "Each perfectly fulfilled the part allotted to him;" so that if Moses did less than Jesus (as may presently appear), he did all that was incumbent on him as administrator of the old economy. The writer is careful not to sink Moses that he may exalt Jesus. (We need not undervalue any of God's gifts in order to extol Christ.)

II. WHILEST CHRIST IS ALL THAT MOSES WAS, HE IS ALSO MORE. From the resemblance he proceeds carefully to the superiority. 1. *Moses was but a part of the household; Christ is the Founder of it.* Moses was born into the family which existed before him, and had to share its privileges, duties, responsibilities, etc. But God was the Founder of the family, and Jesus has before been shown to be God. He must, therefore, be greater than Moses. (All the beauty in anything we love must be more fully in Christ, because it originates in him.) 2. *Moses was but a servant to the house; Christ is Lord of it.* Moses only did what he was bidden: "The Lord said unto Moses." What he did for the nation was not due to him, but was the carrying out of the will of another, and therefore the reverence and thankfulness given to him were really due to the Master whose instrument he was. And that Master was Christ. By so much is Christ better than Moses. (Do we think of that when anything ministers to our well-being, that it is only a servant—all things come of God?) 3. *Moses was but a symbolic witness in the house; Christ was the realized Life of it.* "Moses was for a testimony of those things which were afterwards to be spoken." He and his work were symbolic of things to come—a dead symbol. The contrast is drawn in ver. 6: "Christ, whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness

and the glorying," etc.; that is, the Church is a living organism, whose life is Christ; Christ's family are such by a living faith which binds each member of it to him. Christ is the quickening Spirit to which Moses, as a symbol, pointed. (Everything we value on earth is only a symbol of something better in Christ. Happy we if, ere the evanescent symbol fades, we have grasped the reality; if, when Moses passes out of sight, Jesus is left!)

III. THE CONSIDERATION OF THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST IS THE POWER TO CONFIRM THE WAVERERS IN THEIR ALLEGIANCE TO HIM. Christ is better than Moses; therefore, ye wavering Hebrews, cleave to Christ;—that is the idea. The practical lesson is, that: 1. *Moses, in the case of Israel, corresponds with anything which in our case competes with Christ.* What Moses was to them many an object is to us, and we stand hesitating between it and our Lord. 2. *Then, remember that all that is to be found in this object is to be found in Christ, and much more.* Whatever good it promises us is but the shadow of a greater good in him. 3. *Then, when we are tempted to leave Christ for anything, our safety is in considering him.* If we leave him it is because we do not know him, and that is because we do not reflect upon him. As you "consider him," and he turns on you a sad look, asking, "Will ye also go away?" you will answer decidedly, joyously, "Lord, to whom shall," etc.?—O. N.

VERS. 7—19.—*The comparison of Christ and Moses suggests the possibility of apostasy from Christ.* As Christ and Moses occupied similar positions as leaders of the household of God, and Israel was faithless under the leadership of Moses, and came to ruin as the result, so it is possible that, under the leadership of Christ, there may be the same infidelity and the same bitter end.

I. THE FEAR OF APOSTASY FROM CHRIST. This solemn exhortation is written to professing Christians; and such professors (see ch. x. 32—34)! Their piety was of such a nature that onlookers could not doubt it; yet, says the apostle, even these may apostatize. Members of the Church, this speaks to you. "Take heed." This possibility is enforced: 1. *By Scripture warnings against the repetition of the wilderness-sin.* For what means the quotation here from Ps. xcv., and the four-times repeated "to-day"? Not that the day of grace is short and may speedily terminate, but rather that it was possible for the men of the writer's time to repeat the sin of their fathers in the wilderness. That sin was not confined to those who came out of Egypt; for, five hundred years afterwards, David said to Israel, "To-day it may be true of you." So the writer here says, "Learn from your Scriptures that the guilt of your forefathers, the awful effects of which you know so well, may be repeated by other generations. Beware, therefore, lest it be repeated in you." We have the same reason for godly fear. What mean the parables of wheat and tares, and wise and foolish virgins; the declaration, "Many will say unto me in that day," etc.; the assurance that at the judgment many will be surprised to find themselves on the left hand of the Judge; and such passages as in this Epistle (vi. 14), but that the wilderness-sin may be true of to-day's Church? 2. *By the subtlety of the sin of unbelief.* "Take heed lest," etc.; "Lest any of you be hardened by the," etc.; as though this sin could grow upon the soul that is unaware of it. It is easy to mistake the nature of faith and the fruits of faith, and to have a spirit of unbelief, the one deadly sin, without knowing it. 3. *By the fact that continuance is the test of true faith.* "We are partakers of Christ if we hold our begun confidence," etc. Where vital faith exists it endures, the continued mediation of Christ for his people being the ground of this. But it is not uncommon for professors to think themselves to be Christians because of what they were. As long as there are members of the Church whose hope is of this character, the Church will have those in it who apostatize from the living God. "Lord, is it I?"

II. THE EVIL OF APOSTASY FROM CHRIST. 1. *To apostatize from Christ is to depart from the living God.* (Ver. 12.) We cannot leave Jesus without losing God. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." To relinquish Christ is to be rejected of God. "He that believeth not the Son, the wrath of God abideth on him." 2. *To apostatize from Christ reveals an extraordinary degree of inward evil.* "An evil heart of unbelief." Is unbelief, then, so very evil? It is the relinquishing the Son of God; it is the making God a liar; it is (in the case of an apostate) the breaking away from Christ, not held fast even by the glory of the fuller vision. 3. *To apostatize from*

Christ is to fail of the rest to which he leads. "For to whom sware he," etc. Rejection from Christ is the one deadly sin. "This is the condemnation;" "He that believeth not is," etc.; "And this is the condemnation, that light," etc. How much more so in the case of the apostate! "I saw," said Bunyan, "that from the very gate of heaven there was a path down to hell."

III. THE PREVENTION OF APOSTASY FROM CHRIST. There is only one means—cleave to Christ. Apostasy springs from unbelief; its antidote is faith. How can a persistent faith be maintained? 1. *Faith depends greatly on the condition of the heart.* "They do err in their heart;" the passage is full of that. Men do not, for the most part, leave Christ because of conscious hostility to him, or a desire to depart; it is rather because the lust of other things entering in blinds them to his beauty, and insensibly draws them from his service. 2. *Faith must be shielded from outside influences which tend to weaken it.* "Take heed." There are enemies to faith outside as well as in—pleasures, companionships, literature. 3. *Faith must be supplied with its natural food.* "Exhort one another," etc. That is, present the truth. The food of faith is truth, and in order to produce or maintain faith we must present truth to the mind. Let Scripture be unstudied, and faith will die.—C. N.

Vers. 1—6.—*The superiority of Christ.* I. HERE WE HAVE THE PRE-EMINENCE OF CHRIST OVER THE JEWISH LAWGIVER ASSERTED. Having proved that our Lord was by nature and by his work infinitely above the angels, and that his assuming our flesh qualified him to be the great High Priest, it was desirable to show that he was immeasurably greater than Moses, who was the human mediator in establishment of the covenant and Law. The apostle knew the lustre with which the name and ministry of Moses were always surrounded in the minds of the people of Israel, and therefore with admirable wisdom he proceeds to claim for Jesus Christ his rightful ascendancy and special glory. Jewish believers are addressed as "holy brethren" and partakers of the heavenly calling, which differed from the calling which invited the tribes to march and take possession of Canaan. It is heavenly because it comes to them from heaven and calls them to heaven, and is heard continually by the spiritual ear of those who are advancing to the "rest which remaineth for the people of God." Moses had a glory which was that of fidelity to the thoughts and ideas of Jehovah, who said to him, "See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount." When the tabernacle was finished God looked upon the work and blessed it, because it faithfully realized his design. He was faithful in receiving communications from God and delivering them to the people, and in publishing the laws respecting sacrifices, ceremonies, and social life. He uttered predictions respecting the future course of Israel and the character and ministry of the Lord Jesus, and could say, as Paul said, "That which I have received of the Lord have I delivered unto you." He was faithful to the interests of the people, and in a time of danger from the righteous anger of Jehovah was willing to die for them (Exod. xxxii. 32). He was a servant in the house, and ministered under him who was its Architect and Builder. Our Lord rises infinitely above Moses, because he is a Son, and by his dignity and nature is far above all angels, all patriarchs, and prophets, and even Moses himself, who spake to God "face to face." This is confirmed by the events of the Transfiguration, for when Moses and Elijah were with him in glory the voice was heard, "This is my beloved Son: hear him." The apostle invites us to consider the sublime edifice of the Church, which is the work of God, who created all things, in which Jesus Christ has a special and glorious ministry as the Son of the Father. He is faithful as Moses was in the range of his Divine communications, and said, "Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said to me, so I speak" (John xii. 50). He came to do the Father's will in his mighty and sacrificial sorrows, and drank the bitter Cup that we might drink the cup of blessing. He promised to see his disciples again, and to pour out the Spirit upon them. St. Peter stood with joy on the day of Pentecost, and affirmed, "He hath shed forth that which ye now see and hear." The existence of his Church proves his faithfulness; for the gates of hell have not prevailed against it; and "blessed are all they that trust in him."

II. THE NEED AND ADVANTAGE OF REVERENT CONSIDERATION OF HIS GLORY. To "consider" signifies to withdraw from the excitement and turbulence of human life to look steadily at the Son of God, and resemble, in some degree, the astronomer who enters

into his observatory to gaze in silence on the glory of the heavens above. It was needful for Jewish Christians to look to the glory of Christ, as the best way to counteract the discouragements which arose from the opposition of the synagogue and of those to whom the cross of Christ was a stumbling-block and an offence. The truth of his priesthood was to be acknowledged, and the glory of his apostleship was to be confessed; for he was sent by the Father to reveal his will and claim our faith; and "whosoever will not hear this Prophet shall be destroyed from among the people." If the steady contemplation of Jesus Christ was necessary for Jewish believers, it is equally so for ourselves. It is by beholding him we are changed into the same image of constancy, and hold fast the cheerful confidence with which we began the career, and cherish the exaltation of our hope to the end of our earthly life. Then those who die in the Lord gain the precious recompense of the congratulation and welcome of the Redeemer, who will greet them with those sacred words, "Well done, good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Believers are besought by the endearing appeal to their brotherhood to be faithful to him who was faithful as a Son, to whom they are predestinated to be conformed; and as he is not ashamed to call us brethren, we should strive to please him who encourages us to be faithful unto death, and he will give us "the crown of life."—B.

Vers. 7—11.—*There is an example here of the resources and adaptation of Old Testament Scripture to New Testament conditions.* The sacred writer turns to the ninety-fifth psalm to give force to his remonstrances, and cautions against unbelief and disobedience. This part of the Psalter contains an impressive description of the conduct of the ancient tribes of Israel in their passage from Egypt to Canaan. There were two occasions on which the hardness of their hearts was specially and painfully manifest. The first of these was their unbelief at Rephidim (Exod. xvii. 1—17), when they murmured against God and against his servant Moses, and chode with the man of God respecting their want of water; and the place was called Massah ("temptation") and Meribah ("striving" or "contention"). A similar occurrence took place at Kadesh, when the people murmured again, and when supply of water was miraculously obtained; it was called "water of Meribah" (Numb. xxi. 18). These acts of unbelief sprang from hardness of heart, which the thought of the Divine deliverances wrought for them and the designs of love revealed to them failed to overcome. The goodness of God did not lead them to repentance, but after their hardness and impenitent heart they "treasured up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." They tempted God, and proved him to find whether he was able to do great things, and whether he was the supreme Ruler of them and all creatures. They found that he was of one mind, and none could turn him. "Harden not your hearts," was the counsel given by the psalmist; and by Isaiah, whose mission, through unbelief in the people of Judah, was a "savour of death unto death." The prophets, and Jesus Christ the great Prophet, repeated and urged the same counsel upon the attention of the Jewish people, and urged it in vain. Jehovah was grieved and vexed with the former generation; and the Image of the invisible God wept over Jerusalem, and said, "If thou hadst known . . . the things that make for thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." The punishment of the murmurers in the wilderness was that they should not enter into the rest of Canaan, which was designed for the obedient and those who should become a "kingdom of priests." There is probably a sacred meaning in the choice of the psalm, which specially refers to forty years, which length of time was nearly the period which elapsed from the crucifixion of our Lord to the predicted overthrow of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple and cessation of sacrifices, and the captivity and dispersion of the people. Holding up the examples and punishment of unbelief before the eyes of Jewish believers, the Holy Spirit taught them to remember the severity of God, and to fear lest their apostasy from Christ should shut them out from the higher and more glorious rest of heaven.—B.

Vers. 12—14.—*There is here asserted the need of mutual exhortation to avoid unbelief and follow Christ fully.* Apart from the labours of the ministers of the gospel, who were to teach that Christ was "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," there was to

be brotherly love among Christians, who were affectionately to warn each other against the evils of departing from the truths and profession of the gospel. Their counsel was to be directed to the state of the heart, which if unbelieving was an "evil heart," and therefore full of guile, pride, readiness to receive objections against the gospel, and willingness to yield to the blinding influence of Satan. It would lead them to depart from the living God, and conduct them to ceremonies, and produce works which had no Divine life in them. This work of friendly exhortation was to be done at once, "while it is called To-day;" and whatsoever their hand found to do they were to do with all their might; for sin was full of allurements, and promised, as it did in Paradise, large illumination, freedom, and pleasure. It would be bitterness in the end, and the song of the syren would allure to destruction. The hardening would, if unchecked, go on with imperceptible advance, and would silently desolate the conscience, understanding, and heart. This was to be avoided by perseverance in acts of faith and unlimited confidence in Jesus Christ, who inclined them to begin the course to the upper kingdom of God. As they had "received Christ they were to walk in him," and then they would partake of his Spirit, and share the blessedness which, as a Forerunner, he has gone to prepare. They would share in the joy he has promised to confer upon the brave and immovable in their profession, who shall "sit down with him in his throne, as he has overcome, and sits down with his Father in his throne."—B.

Vers. 15—19.—*As redemption from Egypt did not protect Israel from punishment, so misbelief in Christians will be visited with the Divine displeasure and final failure.* The sacred writer refers us to the psalm from which he had drawn such affecting exhortations to steadfastness in the spiritual life, and now advances to enforce the lessons of earnestness by a series of weighty inquiries derived from the overthrow of many Israelites in the desert. The ideas resemble those of Paul, who in 1 Cor. x. 1—5 instructs us that the Hebrews were baptized unto Moses, and ate spiritual meat and drank spiritual drink, and yet many were overthrown in the wilderness. The first question is (in the Revised Version)—Who were they that did provoke at Meribah and awakened the Divine displeasure? This inquiry is answered by another. Did they not all come out of Egypt, and while the destroying angel was abroad their families were safe; when the sea opposed their march it was dried up to give them passage, and when the enemies pursued them with rage and breathed out threatenings and slaughter, were they not redeemed? These were they who added the baseness of ingratitude to the sin of unbelief. Another inquiry follows, which is—With whom was he displeased, and was it not with those whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? It is the historic realization of a truth penned many centuries afterwards by St. James, who writes, "Lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." These unbelievers died under the frown of Jehovah, and left their sad experience as a beacon to warn against sins which provoked the Divine anger and laid them low in the dust of death. The inquiry advances once more, and asks—Who were they who were denied the privilege of entering upon the much-desired inheritance of Canaan? There is an awfulness in the oath which Jehovah takes, that the unbelieving Hebrews should not enter the pleasant land, with its fertile soil, its pastures, its vineyards, its brooks and streams, and the margin of the Mediterranean Sea. There is no secret in the cause of their failure, as there is no secret in the cause of Christian success. They could not enter in because of unbelief, which, while it barred their entrance into Canaan, excludes men from the "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." If these sad and awful punishments overtook Israel according to the flesh, then the truth which the author designed to teach is that redemption from sin, condemnation, must, to secure all the fruits and issues of the gospel, be associated with humble and persevering fidelity to our profession of faith in Jesus Christ our Lord.—B.

Ver. 1.—*Heavenly things.* There are four heavenly things spoken of in this Epistle which it may be well here to connect together.

I. THE HEAVENLY CALLING. Elsewhere the upward calling. A voice out of the pure, the abiding, the unchangeable. A voice of love, pity, invitation, authority, such as could not sound from anywhere in this distracted, defiled world.

II. THE HEAVENLY GIFT. The *doxa*—the free donation of God; the gift bestowed for

men to taste and live by; the bread of eternal life. Remember what James says, that "every perfect gift is from above" (i. 17).

III. THE HEAVENLY COUNTRY. The fatherland; the *paradis* of the Christian. The voice from heaven calls us there. The heavenly gift is for our provision by the way; the manna of our desert life (ch. xi. 16).

IV. THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM. Where all the glory of the heavenly fatherland is concentrated. The treasures of a land are represented in its capital city. Jerusalem gave a site for the temple, a palace for the king (ch. xii. 22).—Y.

Ver. 1.—*What Christ is to us.* I. CONSIDER THE PEOPLE HERE ADDRESSED, AND THE SPEAKER IN RELATION TO THEM. Amid the endless, fruitless discussion as to the authorship of this Epistle, so much at least it is not unreasonable to conclude, that the author was a Hebrew Christian, not a Gentile one. The Hebrews were now divided into what might be called Christian Hebrews and non-Christian Hebrews—Hebrews of the gospel and Hebrews of the Law—and in addressing the Christian Hebrews the writer implies certain profound distinctions. He calls them: 1. *Brethren*. This not a mere word of courtesy. It acknowledged the relation between writer and readers; it indicated the writer's interest; he had a certain claim to be listened to. And, to put this brotherhood beyond doubt, there is the subsequent "our." Then there is the brotherhood of the readers to one another, and their brotherhood to the Son of God. 2. *Holy*; or perhaps better taken as a substantive—*saints*; men with the stamp of consecration on them. The Jewish nation was a holy nation, holy by nature; and now these believers, with the Holy Spirit's work going on in them, were twice holy. 3. *Partakers of a heavenly calling*. (This expression noticed more particularly in a separate homily.) 4. Those who have made an acknowledgment, a profession, with respect to Christ.

II. CONSIDER THE IMPLIED PARALLEL WITH THE EXPERIENCES OF THE HEBREW NATION. All Hebrews were *brethren* in this sense, that they had descended from one father, Abraham. They were *holy* by the consecration of Jehovah's historical dealings with them. God had not dealt so with any other nation. They were partakers of a heavenly calling. It was a voice of God, not some self-dictated impulse, which sent out Abraham and directed and bounded the track of his posterity. And, most important of all, the Hebrew nation made their acknowledgment of apostle and high priest. The apostle was Moses, and of the high priest Aaron may be taken as representative. Though while living Moses had been only too often the object of hatred, jealousy, rebellion, he had now come to be vehemently acknowledged. It could not be too much proclaimed by the Hebrews of the Law that he was the sent of God.

III. CONSIDER THE APOSTLE AND HIGH PRIEST OF OUR PROFESSION. The Hebrews of the gospel had only one Person to consider, where the Hebrews of the Law had two. The matter is one for consideration—close and penetrating application of the mind. Consideration as opposed to negligence, as opposed to superficiality; sufficient examination as opposed to insufficient. To obey the exhortation meant to bend the mind to all the subsequent arguments and illustrations of the Epistle. The writer was going to exhibit the results of his own consideration. And though the interest and responsibility of this consideration is special to Jews, yet it is well for all Gentiles to consider how thoroughly Jesus is a sent Person. Moses was clearly a sent person; there is nothing to show that in himself he was a man of extraordinary gifts. By so much as the nature of Jesus is richer and purer than that of Moses, we need to be on our guard against forgetting that he is a sent Person. We must acknowledge him as such; the supreme Sent One, out of the infinite, the eternal, the unseen.—Y.

Ver. 6.—*What we are to Christ.* To us Christ is related as Apostle and High Priest (ver. 1). To Christ we are related as the house where he holds the unique position of Son, Heir, Director.

I. WE ARE MORE TO CHRIST THAN EVER HIS BRETHREN COULD BE TO MOSES. Moses had great authority, honourable position, but he was never as a son over his own house. Moses at best was the steward, and even he had checks which reminded him that he was but the first among servants, not an all-controlling lord. And yet he was a man to be honoured. Mark this in the Epistle, that its writer, in exalting Christ, exalted Moses also; whereas the enemies of Christ only exalted Moses, that by the same move-

ment they might correspondingly depreciate Christ. The nation of Israel was as the house where Moses dwelt as appointed responsible director and custodian. A servant certainly, but a servant of a peculiar kind. He is called *θεράπων*. Nowhere else in the New Testament is a servant called by this name; it is as if there must be a unique description for a unique relation. If simple servitude had been all needing to be signified, *δοῦλος* would have done; if simple ministry, *διδάσκαλος* would have done. But Moses has a servant-name to himself; as much as to say, "Among all the servants of God there has been none greater than Moses." The word indicates at one and the same time service and the greatest responsibility that could rest on mere man. Moses was the great steward of God in God's house for the time being, even the people of Israel. Compare him with the man spoken of as Joseph's steward (Gen. xliii. 19; xliv. 4). Consider also the question of Jesus in Luke xii. 42: "Who then is that *faithful* and wise steward (*οἰκονόμος*), whom his lord shall make ruler over his household (*οἰκονομία*)?" "It is required in a steward that he shall be found *faithful*." Thus the nation of Israel was a great deal to Moses, but not so much as we are to Christ. We are for the use of Christ, at his disposal, under his control, in a way far transcending the control which Moses had over Israel. Moses died and Joshua succeeded. Joshua died and others succeeded. But as a Son over his house, over the successive generations of Christians, Jesus is, emphatically, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

II. THE CONDITIONS WHICH MAKE US ABIDINGLY THE HOUSE OF CHRIST. We are the house of Christ who is the Son of God. It is a great destiny to feel that we are of use and service to him. But the use and service depend on our perseverance. Christ asks great, arduous, necessarily painful things from his household. Not that he rejoices in pain—everything but that; but to hold a place under him requires faithfulness in extremities. His household may have to resist unto blood, striving against sin. As to the members of Christ's household, Christ has infused into their hearts an expectation of serving him amid surroundings and conditions far different to those of the present service. And this expectation is one which at times makes them confident and also free of speech in their approaches to their Master. It is an expectation in which they can glory as the world looks curiously on them, because of present things they give up for the sake of the expectation. But here is the peril lest the confidence and the expectation sink so low in the heart as to lose power over the life. Moses was faithful in his house, but the house was not faithful. The privations and delays of the wilderness well-nigh killed the joy of liberty from Egyptian bondage, and the noble aspirations towards the land promised by Jehovah. Jesus will be faithful in the household of God; and some in that household will always be faithful to Jesus, through whatever dubious and protracted experiences. The point is one for the individual. Will he, through impatience and want of the single eye, the straightforward gaze, lose his place and promotion in the household of God?—Y.

Ver. 12.—*The evil heart of unbelief*. I. THE NEED OF WARNING. The state of things indicated is repudiated by many in whom it obtains. Those in whom unbelief is most deeply seated think themselves real believers in whatever is reasonable and true. Therefore warning is needed—*affectionate* warning, it will be observed. The readers are again addressed as "brethren." Also *individual examination* is suggested. Men have fallen from what seemed the strongest faith into the most shameful apostasies. A brother, sent of God, warns us to be on our guard.

II. THE DEEP-SEATED MISCHIEF. There may be outward discipleship and service, but a heart not trusting in the living God. There may be abundant manifestations of the Divine love and power, but the heart may be so subdued to worldly considerations that nothing shown by God can produce its proper impression. We believe too much in living *men*, in their power to help or to hinder; we trim everything to catch their favour or keep in their good graces. And meantime the living God is as if he were not. If at any moment we have been in real connection with his infinite grace and power, there is something in our hearts which tends to draw us gradually away. Nothing is more absurd than unbelief in God, and yet nothing is harder than practical faith. And to get rid of unbelief we need to have the heart renewed and inspired. We readily see the need of heart-renewal if it be some other sin that is in question—if it be malicious, or selfish, or sensual feeling that we want to get rid of. And so our

prayer should be, "Make us feel that unbelief is sin, moral malady, a something that needs to be cured by the turning of the heart to God." There is manifestation of truth enough, evidence enough; the lack lies in our disposition.—Y.

Ver. 13.—*The deceitfulness of sin.* It matters little whether we take the reference here as to the sin of unbelief specially, or to sin in general. All sin is deceiving in its beginnings. The seed hides much which the sower cannot understand until he is compelled to reap the fruit. And his only safety is to trust a timely warning, and have nothing to do with the seed. And though to each of us individually some forms of sin appear not at all deceitful, yet we are deceived by others. Some form of sin is deceitful to every one of us. The great enemy of man considers us according to our individuality. There are temptations for the appetite, temptations for the senses, temptations for the intellect.

I. WE SHOULD REST IN THE CONVICTION THAT SIN IS A DECEITFUL THING. We cannot be too cautious, too observant, in pursuing our path through this complicated world. Agencies are always at work to make the worse appear the better reason. Things *visible*, whether things attractive or repulsive, press upon our eyes; and concerning the attractive we find ourselves saying, "This is worth making ours even at a great price;" concerning the repulsive, "This is to be avoided at whatever cost." The world around us speaks with a voice that discountenances things invisible and Divine. If we begin to act as hearing a voice from heaven, others say *they* have heard no voice; whereupon we are easily persuaded that no voice really spoke. Sometimes sin dresses itself up in the guise of liberality and charity, and again it is found beneath the appearance of zeal for God and goodness. If there is no danger that we should be tempted into any kind of vicious living, then most of all is the deceitfulness of sin to be feared. Before the readers of this Epistle a great historical example was put, drawn from the conduct of their own ancestors. The behaviour of the children of Israel in the wilderness is an illustration, on a great scale, of the deceitfulness of sin; especially of the proneness of the heart to fall into unbelief with respect to spiritual things. It might have seemed safe to predict that, after all the great Divine deliverance of which they had been objects, they would have steadily gone on in the way of obedience; whereas only a very short time elapses before they are found believing the wishes of their own hearts rather than the word of God through Moses. "Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall." Those who are fallen to-day were standing yesterday, and some standing to-day will be fallen to-morrow. And if we are not among the fallen, it will be because we are giving daily practical heed to this truth concerning the deceitfulness of sin.

II. HOW ARE WE TO GUARD AGAINST THIS DECEITFULNESS? All that the writer says just in this part of the Epistle is negative—at least, it seems negative. But that simply means the iteration and reiteration of the danger of unbelief. No one knows better than the writer that we cannot guard against unbelief in a *negative* way. The only way of getting better of the deceitfulness of sin is to rise above it, and be so intent on our Saviour's business as to have no time, no inclination, to attend to what sin may have to say.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IV.

A REST STILL OFFERED TO CHRISTIANS.

Ver. 1.—Let us fear, therefore, lest, a promise being still left of entering into his rest, any one of you should seem to have come short. This verse is a renewed warning against remissness, based (as is shown by the connecting *εἰ*) on the preceding argument, but introducing also, by means of the clause, *καταλειπούσης*, etc., a new

thought, the elucidation of which is the subject of what follows. The new thought is that the true "rest of God," typified only by the rest of Canaan, remains still for the attainment of Christians. That this is the case has not yet been shown; and hence the clause, "a promise being still left," etc., does not point to a conclusion already arrived at, but to what is coming. The new thought is taken up in ver. 2, and what has been thus intimated in ver. 1 is asserted as a conclusion after proof in ver. 9, *ἐπεὶ*

ἀπαλείφεται, etc. A different view of the drift of the warning in this verse, maintained very decidedly by Ebrard, demands attention. It rests on the interpretation of δοκῇ ὑστερήκεται, which is taken to mean "should think that he has come too late," i.e. for the promise of the rest, under the idea that its meaning had been exhausted in the rest of Canaan. It may be said in support of this view that such is the most obvious meaning of the phrase; that δοκεῖν in the New Testament most commonly means "think" or "suppose;" that the primary sense of ὑστερεῖν is that of being behindhand, either in place or in time; and that the perfect ὑστερήκεται is thus accounted for, whereas, according to the usual interpretation, the whole phrase is unsuitable: why was not ὑστερήσῃ written, if a mere warning against remissness was intended? Further, it may be said that what immediately follows is in favour of this view of the purport of the caution in ver. 1, being an evident carrying out of its idea. Thus the verse is supposed to be not at all a continuation of the previous hortatory section, but rather serving as the thesis of the coming argumentative section, though put in the form of a caution because imperfect appreciation of the view to be now established was at the root of the danger of the Hebrew Christians. Some of them at least did not fully grasp the true character of the gospel as being the fulfilment of the old dispensation, the realization of its types and promises. They were inclined to rest in the Law as a revelation to which the gospel was only supplementary, and hence to regard the promised land, the offer of which was before their time, as the only rest intended; and therefore the writer, after adducing the example of the Israelites under Moses as a warning against remissness, prefaces his exposition of the true rest of God by a warning against misapprehending it. But against this view of the meaning of δοκῇ ὑστερήκεται there are the following reasons: (1) The word φοβήσθαι suggests rather (like βλέπετε) a warning against conduct that might lead to forfeiture than a correction of an inadequate conception; and ὅν connects the warning with what has gone before, in which the view of what the true rest is has not entered. (2) Though δοκεῖν is most frequently used in the New Testament in its sense of "thinking," "seeming to one's self;" yet it has there, as in Greek generally, the sense also of "appearing," "seeming to others;" and certainly, as far as the word itself is concerned, may have this sense here. Also the verb ὑστερεῖν, though its primary idea (as of ὑστερος) is that of "coming after," is nevertheless invariably

used in the New Testament to express "deficiency," or "falling short" (cf. especially in this Epistle, ch. xii. 15): it is never elsewhere (though capable of the meaning) used to express lateness in time. (3) The phrase, δοκῇ ὑστερήκεται, in the sense of "seem to have fallen short" (rather than ὑστερήσῃ) is capable of being accounted for. One explanation of it, adopted by Alford, is indeed hardly tenable. He accounts for the past tense by supposing reference to the final judgment; taking it to mean, "lest any one of you should then appear [i.e. be found] to have fallen short." But the word δοκεῖν, which, however used, refers, not to what is made evident, but to what is thought or seems, refuses to be thus misinterpreted. It is better to take it as a softening expression. We may suppose that the writer (with a delicacy that reminds us of St. Paul) was unwilling to imply his own expectation of any failure; and so he only bids his readers beware of so living as even to present the appearance of it or suggest the thought of it to others. According to this view, the tense of ὑστερήκεται is intelligible, the supposed deficiency spoken of being previous to its being perceived or suspected. It is not necessary to supply an understood genitive, such as "the promise," or "the rest," after ὑστερήκεται. It may be used (as elsewhere) absolutely, to express deficiency or failure; i.e. in the conditions required for attainment. One view of its meaning is that it has reference to the idea of being behindhand in a race; but there is nothing in the context to suggest this figure. (4) It is not necessary that ver. 1 should express *only* the idea of the following argument; it does sufficiently express it in the clause, καταλειπεμένης, etc.; and it is in the style of this Epistle to connect new trains of argument by a continuous chain of thought with what has gone before (cf. the beginning of ch. ii. and iii.). Though there is uncertainty as to the sequence of thought in the several clauses of the following argument (vers. 2-11), its general drift is clear. Its leading ideas are these: The invitation to enter God's rest contained in the psalm shows that the rest of Canaan, which, though forfeited under Moses, had long been actually attained under Joshua, was not the final rest intended. What, then, is meant by this remarkable term, "my rest," i.e. God's own rest? Our thoughts go back to the beginning of the Bible, where a rest of God himself is spoken of; where he is said to have rested on the seventh day from all his works. Participation, then, in that heavenly rest—a true sabbath rest with God—is what the term implies. Though this rest began "from the foundation of the world," man's destined

share in it, however long delayed, was intimidated by the typical history of the Israelites under Moses, and by the warning and renewed invitation of the psalm. This renewed invitation makes it plain that it is still attainable by God's people. It has at last been made attainable by Christ, who, as our great High Priest, has himself entered it, and leads us into it if we are but faithful.

Ver. 2.—For truly we have had good tidings (or, a gospel) preached unto us, even as also they: but the word of hearing did not profit them, not being mingled by faith with those that heard it. The meaning and purpose of the first part of this verse is plain, as is also the general intention of the second; viz. to account parenthetically for the gospel to the Israelites under Moses having failed of its purpose, and at the same time to renew the warning of their example with respect to the gospel now preached to Christians. But the passage is still one of singular difficulty, on account both of the various readings of it, and of the peculiarity of the language used whatever reading be adopted. With respect to the various readings, the main and indeed only important question is between (1) *συγκεκριμένους*, agreeing with *λόγος ἀκοῆς*, and (2) *συγκεκριμένους*, agreeing with *ἐκείνους*. The variation between *συγκεκριμ.* and *συγκεκριρασμ.*, being only different forms of the participle, does not affect the meaning. Then the readings *τῶν ἀκουσάντων* and *τοῖς ἀκούσασιν* for *τοῖς ἀκούσας* rest on such slight authority, and are so likely to have been substitutions (the latter to make the reading *συγκεκριμένους* intelligible), that they need not be considered. (1) The reading of the Textus Receptus, following the Vulgate, is *μη συγκεκριμένους τῇ πίστει τοῖς ἀκούσας*. But (2) the great preponderance of ancient authority (including that of all the uncial manuscripts except *κ*) supports *συγκεκριμένους* or *συγκεκριρασμένους*. The latter, then, must be accepted as the true reading, if authority alone is to be our guide. But then comes the difficulty of making any sense of it. The only way of doing so is to understand *τοῖς ἀκούσας* ("those who heard") in the sense of "those who hearkened;" the sense of the passage being "The word of hearing did not profit them, because they were not united by faith with those who not only heard, but hearkened and obeyed." Most of the Fathers, reading *συγκεκριμένους*, take *τοῖς ἀκούσας* to refer in this sense to Caleb and Joshua. But, if what has been said above be true as to these exceptions to the general unbelief not having been in the writer's mind, such an allusion is highly improbable. Some (Alford, e.g.) take *τοῖς ἀκούσας* with

no historical reference, but as denoting hearers generally. Alford, however, though adopting this as the best solution of an acknowledged difficulty, confesses himself not satisfied with it, as well he may. A very serious objection to either view, even apart from the strangeness of the whole expression if such be its meaning, is that, though the verb *ἀκούειν* is certainly used elsewhere in the sense thus assigned to it, the whole context here suggests a different one. Cf. *supra* (ch. iii. 16), *τῶς γὰρ ἀκούσαντες παρελήσαν*: and especially *ὁ λόγος τῆς ἀκοῆς* immediately preceding. 'Ακοῆς, denoting hearing only, seems to have suggested the use of the participle *ἀκούσας*, to which it would therefore be most unnatural to assign a different meaning. If, then, all devices for making sense of the best supported text prove unsatisfactory, and if the Textus Receptus gives an intelligible meaning, we might surely be justified in adopting the latter, however ill supported. Internal evidence (though great caution should be used in our estimate of it) need not yield entirely to external, nor common sense to authority, in the determination of true readings. But in this case the argument from internal probability has now been strengthened by the discovery of the reading *συγκεκριρασμένους* in the Sinaitic Codex (*κ*). This, then, being adopted, though the expression be peculiar, the meaning is no longer obscure, whether we take *τῇ πίστει* or *τοῖς ἀκούσας* as governed by *συγκεκριρασμένους*. It may be either that "the word of hearing did not profit them because it was not mingled with their faith to those that heard;" or "because it was not mingled by faith with those that heard it." In the latter case the idea is that of the necessity of the spoken word entering the heart, and being (so to speak) assimilated by the hearers through the instrumentality of faith, in order to profit them.

Ver. 3.—For we do enter into the rest, we who have believed (*οἱ πιστεύσαντες*, the historical aorist, pointing to the time when Christians became believers; with a reference also to *τῇ πίστει* in the preceding verse: but the emphasis is on the first word in the sentence, *εἰσερχόμεθα*: "For we Christian believers have an entrance into the rest intended"): even as he hath said, As I swore in my wrath, If they shall enter into my rest; although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. This seems to be a concise enunciation of the proof, unfolded in the verses that follow, of the true rest being one into which Christians have still an entrance. The idea is that, though God's own rest had been from the beginning, and man had not yet entered it, yet the possibility of his doing so had not ceased to

be intimated: it had continued open potentially to man.

Vers. 4, 5.—For he hath said somewhere (*scilicet*: cf. ch. ii. 6) of the seventh day on this wise, And God rested the seventh day from all his works; and in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. Here the argument is carried out. The first passage quoted shows what must be understood by the "rest of God;" the second shows that it still remains open, that "it remaineth that some should enter thereinto." This being the case—

Vers. 6, 7.—Since therefore it remains that some should enter into it, and they to whom the good tidings were before preached entered not in because of disobedience, he again defineth a certain day, saying in David, after so long a time, To-day; as it hath been before said, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, etc. The continued openness of the rest, and the failure of the Israelites of old to enter it, are the reasons why a further day for entering was defined in the psalm. But here the thought is suggested that the Israelites had not finally failed, for that, though those under Moses did so, the next generation under Joshua did attain the promised land. No, it is replied; the rest of the promised land was but a type after all; it was not the true rest of God: otherwise the psalmist could not have still assigned a day for entering it so long after the arrival at Shiloh;—

Vers. 8, 9.—For if Joshua had given them rest, he would not have spoken afterward of another day. The conclusion is now drawn: There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God; the true nature of the rest intended being beautifully denoted by the word *σαββατισμός*, which refers to the Divine rest "from the foundation of the world," while the offer of it to true believers always, and not to the Israelites only, is intimated by the phrase, "the people of God."

Ver. 10.—For he that is entered into his rest (God's, as before) hath himself also rested from his works, as from his own God. There are two ways of understanding this verse. Its general intention is, indeed, clear. It accounts for the use of the word *σαββατισμός* which precedes, expressing that the true meaning of "God's rest" is not satisfied by any earthly rest, but only by one like his. The question is whether the verse is to be taken as a general proposition or as referring specifically to Christ. In favour of the latter view is the aorist *κατέπαυσε*. The *literal* translation would be "He that entered . . . himself also rested." Ebrard, on this ground, strenuously defends the reference to Christ; and also on the ground of parallelism with ch. ii. 9 in the first division of the general argument. In the

first division (ch. ii.) the course of thought was—Dominion over creation has been assigned to man: man has not attained it: Jesus has; and in Jesus man fulfils his destiny. In this second division the corresponding course of thought is—God's rest has been offered to man: man has not attained it: Jesus has; and in Jesus man may enter it. And thus (as has been explained above) the conclusion that Jesus is the High Priest of humanity is led up to by two parallel lines of argument. But the third of the propositions of the second line of argument (corresponding to ch. ii. 9 in the first) is not distinctly expressed unless it be in the verse before us; and therefore this verse, on this ground as well as that of the use of the aorist, is taken to refer to Christ. On the other hand, it is argued (Bleek, De Wette, Delitzsch, etc.) that, if a specific reference to Christ had been intended, he would have been mentioned, so as to make the meaning clear; and secondly, that the aorist *κατέπαυσε* is legitimate, though the proposition be a general one. Delitzsch explains it thus: "The author might have written *καταπαύει* or (more classically) *καταπαύεται*: but he has taken up into the main proposition the *κατέπαυσε*, which properly belongs (according to Gen. ii. 2) to the clause of comparison: whosoever has entered God's rest, of him the *κατέπαυσε* *ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ* holds good in the same manner as of God." And, further, it is to be observed that the Greek aorist may sometimes be put for the present, "to express an action completely determined, every doubt as to its truth and unalterableness being removed" (Matthias, 'Gr. Gram.,' § 506). In this instance the idea might be—he that has entered into God's rest rested, when he so entered, from all his works, etc. On the whole, it appears that specific reference to Christ is not apparent from the immediate context, or required by the mere language used. Still, in consideration of the general argument, we may take the writer to have meant his readers to understand that it was Christ who had so entered the rest of God, so as to lead God's people into it. That this is so appears from ver. 14, "ἔχοντες οὖν ἀρχιερεῖα μέγα, διηλησθέντα τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, which seems to require that preceding link of thought.—Among man's deepest feelings is a longing for rest. Haply in the freshness and ardour of early life not deeply felt, it recurs from time to time, and grows stronger with advancing years. Nothing in life fully satisfies this longing. Labours, distresses, disappointments, anxieties, never allow the desired repose. Few there are whose hearts have not sometimes echoed the psalmist's words, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for

then would I flee away, and be at rest!" Many since Job have felt something of his longing to be where "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." Is there to be no satisfaction ever of this deep human craving? Holy Scripture meets it as it meets all others. It spoke of a rest of God above creation from the beginning of time; it intimated man's part and interest in it by the weekly sabbath which he was to keep with God. But this was, after all, but a symbol and earnest of something unattained. At length a fuller realization of the longed-for rest was held out to the chosen people, and the promised land was pictured beforehand in the colours of an earthly Paradise. Forfeited, when first offered, through the people's unworthiness (representing by an historical parable the bar to man's entrance into the eternal rest), it was attained at last. But the true rest still came not. Canaan, like the sabbath, proved but a symbol of something unattained. Yet the old longing for rest went on, and inspired men went on proclaiming it as attainable and still to come. The irrepressible craving, the suggestive symbols, the prophetic anticipations, are all fulfilled in Christ. He, when he had passed with us through this earthly scene of labour, entered, with our nature, into that eternal rest of God, to prepare a place for us, having by his atonement removed the bar to human entrance. Through our faith in him we are assured that our deep-seated craving for satisfaction unattained as yet, which we express by the term "rest," is a true inward prophecy, and that, though we find it not here, we may through him, if we are faithful, confidently expect it there, where "beyond these voices there is peace."

There now follows (vers. 11—14) a renewal of the warning of ch. iii. 7—iv. 1, urged now with increased force in view of the danger of alighting such a revelation as the gospel has been shown to be; after which (ver. 14, etc.) come words of encouragement, based on the view, now a second time arrived at, of Christ being our great High Priest. And thus the exposition of his priesthood, which follows in ch. v., is led up to.

Ver. 11.—Let us therefore do our diligence (*σπουδάσωμεν*, so translated in A.V. 2 Tim. iv. 9, 21) to enter into that rest, lest any one fall after the same example of disobedience (*ἀπειθείας*: not *ἀπιστίας*, which means "unbelief"). It is a question, though not at all affecting the general sense of the passage, whether *ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ ἀπειθείᾳ* *πίστεως* should not be translated "fall into the same example." Πίστις *ἐν* has undoubtedly the

sense of "to fall into," and is frequently so used in the LXX., and the subordinate position of *πίστεως* in the sentence—between *ἀπειθείᾳ* and *τῇ ἀπειθείᾳ*—is against its being used absolutely as the emphatic word. If so, the meaning will be "fall into the same *exemplar* of disobedience," i.e. the kind of disobedience of which that of the Israelites was a sample. This interpretation of the phrase, being that of the Vulgate, is supported by Alford, Davison, Lünemann; though most modern commentators (Bengel, Bleek, De Wette, Tholuck, Delitzsch, Wordsworth), with Chrysostom, take *πίστεως* absolutely, as in Rom. xi. 11 (*rust*, Bengel), and *ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ ἀπειθείᾳ* as meaning, "so as to present the same (i.e. a like) example of disobedience," the *ἐν*, according to Delitzsch, being the *ἐν* of state or condition. The warning is next enforced by a vivid representation of the penetrating and resistless power of the "Word of God." The question arises whether "the Word of God" is here to be understood in St. John's sense of the *Hypostatic Word*, i.e. the Second Person of the holy Trinity, who became incarnate in Christ. It is so understood by the Fathers generally; and the fact of this Epistle being tinged generally with the thought and terminology of Philo (whose use of the word *λόγος*, derived from the Platonic philosophy in combination with Jewish theology, seems to anticipate in some degree, however vaguely, the doctrine of St. John) gives some countenance to the view. But against it are the following considerations:—(1) Christ is not elsewhere in this Epistle designated as "the Word" but as "the Son." His eternal relation to the Father, though otherwise plainly intimated, is not expressed by this term, as it was by St. John. (2) The description of the Word, as "sharper than any two-edged sword," is not suitable to the Hypostatic Word himself, but rather to the utterance of his power. Thus in Rev. i. 16, "the Son of man," and in Rev. xix. 15, "he whose name is called the Word of God," has a "sharp two-edged sword proceeding out of his mouth." The sword is not himself, but that which "came forth out of his mouth." Cf. Isa. xl. 4, "He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked;" cf. also Eph. vi. 17, "The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." Hence, notwithstanding the prevailing view of the Fathers, it seems best to understand the term here as meaning generally the Divine utterance, without definite reference to the Hypostatic Word. It was the Word of God, in this sense, that debarred the ancient Israelites from their rest, and doomed them in the wilderness; it is the same Word which still more, as being uttered in the Son, is so

searching and resistless now. True, it is through the Hypostatic Word that the God-head has ever operated, of old as well as now, being God's eternal utterance of himself: the only question is whether this truth is here intended to be expressed, or, in other words, whether *λόγος* has here the personal sense in which St. John uses the term. It is possible that the writer passes in thought to a personal sense in the *ἐνέκτιον αὐτοῦ* of ver. 13, where *αὐτοῦ* may refer to *ὁ λόγος* preceding, rather than to *τοῦ Θεοῦ*. But certainly at the beginning of the passage this specific sense does not seem to be suggested either by the context or the language used.

Ver. 12.—For living is the Word of God, and powerful (or, *effectual*; cf. Phil. 6; 1 Cor. xvi. 9), and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Observe how the predicates form a climax. The Word of God is, first, *living*, instinct with the life of the living God who utters it, itself a living power (cf. *λόγια ζῶντα*, Acts vii. 38); then, not only so, but also *operative*, *effective* of its purpose; then, in this its operation, more keenly *cutting* than any sword; cutting so as to *penetrate* through and through—through the whole inner being of man to its inmost depths; then, in doing so, *discerning* and opening to judgment all the secrets of his consciousness. This description of the power of the Word of God is given as a reason for the warning, *σπουδάζομεν, etc.*, "Let us give diligence," etc.; for, if we slight the Word of God, we can have no escape from its irresistible operation; we shall be thoroughly exposed and inevitably judged. The view of the Word of God having a sharply *cutting* operation is found in Philo, from whom Bleek cites a series of passages cognate to this in the Epistle. Cf. especially one in the treatise, 'Quis Rerum Divinarum Hæres.?' *Τῷ τομεῖ τῶν συμπάντων αὐτοῦ λόγῳ* ὅς, εἰς τὴν ὀξυτάτην ἀκορηθεὶς ἀκμήν, διαλῶν οὐδέποτε λήγει τὰ αἰσθητὰ πάντα, ἐπειδὴν δὲ μέχρι τῶν ἀτόμων καὶ λεγομένων ἁμερῶν διεξέλθῃ, etc. And for the comparison to a sword, cf. (as above referred to) Eph. vi. 17; Rev. i. 16; xix. 15; and Isa. xi. 4. The true reading of the part of the sentence, "of soul and spirit," etc., is *ψυχῆς καὶ πνεύματος ἁρμῶν τε καὶ μυελῶν*, the *τε* of the Textus Receptus after *ψυχῆς* being ill supported. The second *τε*, after *ἁρμῶν*, is therefore most naturally taken, and so as to give the best sense, in the sense of "both" not "and;" i.e. the second clause is not to be taken as denoting a further dividing—of the bodily parts as well as of the soul and spirit, but

as expressing, by recurrence to the figure of a sword, the thoroughness of the division of soul and spirit. Further, the division spoken of is surely not of the soul *from* the spirit, as some have taken it. Delitzsch, *e.g.*, explains to this effect—that in fallen man his *πνεῦμα*, which proceeded from God and carries in itself the Divine image, has become, "as it were, extinguished;" that "through the operation of grace man recalls to mind his own true nature, though shattered by sin;" "that heavenly nature of man reappears when Christ is formed in him;" and thus the Word of God "marks out and separates" the *πνεῦμα* in him from the *ψυχῆ* in which it had been, "as it were, extinguished." Then, taking the clause, *ἁρμῶν τε καὶ μυελῶν*, to express a further process of dissection, he explains by saying that the Word of God "exhibits to man the fact that ungodly powers are working also in his bodily frame, which has now in every joint and chord and marrow become the seat of sin and death, and so "goes on to scrutinize" his bodily as well as his spiritual part," and "lays bare before the eyes of God and before his own the whole man thus described." But the idea of the separation, in the above sense, of the *πνεῦμα* from the *ψυχῆ*, even if tenable, is certainly far-fetched, and that of the corporeal dissection supposed is hardly intelligible. Further, the "dividing" of the bodily parts spoken of in the text (whether an illustration or a further process) does not suggest the separation of one part from another, since a sword does not divide the joints or the limbs (whichever be meant by *ἁρμῶν*) from the marrow, though it may penetrate both. We may explain thus: It is well known that St. Paul divides man's complex nature into body, soul, and spirit—*σῶμα, ψυχῆ, πνεῦμα* (1 Thess. v. 23). His bodily organization (*σῶμα*) is not apparently here under consideration, except in regard to the figure of the sword; the *ψυχῆ* is his animal life or soul, the seat (so to speak) of his sensations, and of his natural affections and desires; his *πνεῦμα* is the more Divine part of his nature, in virtue of which he has a conscience, aspires after holiness, apprehends spiritual mysteries, holds communion with God, and is influenced by the Divine Spirit. The idea, then, is that, as a very keen sword not only cuts through the joints dividing bone from bone, but also through the bones themselves into the marrow within them, so the Word of God penetrates and discloses not only the *ψυχῆ* but the *πνεῦμα* too, "piercing through soul and spirit, *yea* [with reference to the illustration used] through both joints [or, 'limbs'] and marrow." Ebrard, taking *ἁρμῶν* in the sense of "limbs" (a sense in which the word is used, though

that of "joints" is its proper and more usual one), regards these and the "marrow" as corresponding respectively to the *ψυχή* and the *σπένδα*: the *ψυχή* being understood as "something lying deep in man, the *σπένδα* lying still deeper." Thus as a very trenchant sword cuts through, not only the limbs, but also the marrow within them, so the Word of God penetrates, not only that part of human consciousness which is expressed by *ψυχή*, but also that deeper and more inward part which is expressed by *σπένδα*. But the general sense of the passage is plain enough without our supposing this strict analogy to have been intended. Expositors, in their analysis of the meaning of passages, may often detect more than the author thought of. On *κριτικὴ ἐνθυμήσις* (translated "a discernor of"), cf. 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25, where the effects of the Word of God, brought to bear through the gift of prophecy on one without the gift entering into a congregation of prophesying Christians, are thus described: "he is convinced of all, he is judged [rather, 'examined,' 'scrutinized,' *ἀνακρίνεται*] of all; the secrets of his heart are made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you [or, 'among you'] of a truth." So searching and judicial is the power of the Word of God, that it reaches and discloses the inmost depths of a man's consciousness—discloses them to himself, and, though he should resist, leaves him without escape, exposed and judged.

Ver. 13.—Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and laid open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. The main difficulty in this verse is as to the meaning of the word *τετραχλισμένα* (translated "laid open"). The verb *τραχλίζω* (which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament or LXX., but is, with its compound *ἀτραχλίζω*, not uncommon in Philo and Josephus) has in classical Greek the sense of "seizing by the throat" or "bending back the neck," as in wrestling. And this, with the further idea of "overthrowing" or "laying prostrate," is the prevailing sense in Philo, from whom Wetstein quotes many passages in illustration. Taking, then, with most modern commentators, the sense of bending back the neck as the primary one, we have only to consider what secondary meaning is here to be attached to it. Some take the idea to be that of being thrown on the ground supine, so as to be thoroughly exposed to view. So Bengel: "*Τραχλίζω*, resupino, Græce et Latine dicitur pro patetfado. Corpora quæ prona jacent vix nuda censentur; nam se ipsa tegunt: resupinata, secundum partes nobilissimas quas-

que et distinctissimas visui patent." Many (Elsner, Wolf, Baumgarten, Kuinoel, Bretschneider, Bleek, De Wette, etc., following Perizonius, on *Ælian*, 'Var. Hist.' xii. 58) see an allusion to the Roman custom of exposing criminals "*reducto capite*," "*retortis cervicibus*," so that all might see their faces (see Suetonius, 'Vitel.' 17; Pliny, 'Panegy.' 84. 3). There is, however, no other known instance of the Greek verb being used with this reference, which there seems to be no necessity for assuming. The idea may be simply the general one thus expressed by Delitzsch, "that whatever shamefaced creature bows its head, and would fain withdraw and cloak itself from the eyes of God, has indeed the throat, as it were, bent back before those eyes, with no possibility of escape, exposed and naked to their view." Many of the ancients (Chrysostom, Theodoret, Eusebius, Theophylact) saw in *τετραχλισμένα* a reference to the treatment of sacrificial victims, as being smitten on the neck or hung by the neck for the purpose of being flayed from the neck downwards, or cut open thence, so as to expose the entrails to view. But no instance is known of such use of the word *τραχλίζω*, the idea of which may have been suggested to commentators by the figure of the sword in the verse preceding; which figure, however, there is no reason to suppose continued in ver. 13, the idea of which is simply complete exposure, introduced by *ὅτι ἀφανής*. The ancients take the concluding expression, *πρὸς ᾧ ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος*, as meaning "to whom our account must be given," i.e. "to whom we are responsible as our judge"—in the sense of *λόγον δίδόναι*. The A.V. seems better to give the general idea of relation by the apt phrase, "with whom we have to do." Of course, *λόγος* here has no reference to the Word of God, the recurrence of the word, in a subordinate sense, being merely accidental.

Ver. 14.—To the interposed minatory warning of the three preceding verses now succeeds encouragement, based on the view, which has been now a second time led up to, of Christ being our great High Priest, who can both sympathize and succour. The passage answers closely in thought to the conclusion of ch. ii., and might naturally have followed there; but that, before taking up the subject of Christ's priesthood, the writer had another line of thought to pursue, leading up (as has been explained) to the same conclusion. The *ὅτι* at the beginning of ver. 14 either connects *κρατῶμεν* ("let us hold fast") with the verses immediately preceding—in the sense, "The Word of God being so searching and resistless, let us therefore hold fast," etc.—in which case the participial clause *ἔχοντες*, etc., is a confirmation of this exhortation (so Delitzsch); or

is connected logically with the participial clause as a resumption of the whole preceding argument. Certainly the idea of the participial clause is the prominent one in the writer's mind, what follows being an expansion of it. And the position of *οὕτως* suggests this connection. It is to be observed that, after the manner of the Epistle, this concluding exhortation serves also as a transition to the subject of the following chapters, and anticipates in some degree what is to be set forth, though all the expressions used have some ground in what has gone before. Having then a great High Priest who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. The rendering of *διεληλυθὲς τοὺς οὐρανοὺς* in the A.V. ("is passed into the heavens") is evidently wrong. The idea is that Christ has passed through the intermediate heavens to the immediate presence of God—to the sphere of the eternal *σαββατισμὸς*. In his use of the plural, *τοὺς οὐρανοὺς*, the writer may have had in his mind the Jewish view of an ascending series of created heavens. Clemens Alexandrinus, e.g. speaks of seven: *Ἐντὶ οὐρανοὺς οὗς τινὲς ἀριθμοῦσι κατ' ἐπαύθασιν*. Cf. also "the heaven and the heaven of heavens" (Deut. x. 14; 2 Chron. vi. 18; Neh. ix. 6), and "who hast set thy glory above the heavens" (Ps. viii. 1), also "the third heaven," into which St. Paul was rapt (2 Cor. xii. 2). Cf. also Eph. iv. 10, *Ὁ ἀναβὰς ὑπεράνω πάντων τῶν οὐρανῶν, ἵνα πληρώσῃ τὰ πάντα*. The conception of the phrase is that, whatever spheres of created heavens intervene between our earth and the eternal uncreated, beyond them to it Christ has gone,—into "heaven itself (*αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανόν*);" "before the face of God" (ch. ix. 24). From this expression, together with Eph. iv. 10 (above quoted), is rightly deduced the doctrine of Christ's ubiquity even in his human nature. For, carrying that nature with him and still retaining it, he is spoken of as having passed to the region which admits no idea of limitation, and so as to "fill all things." The obvious bearing of this doctrine on that of the presence in the Eucharist may be noted in passing. (It is to be observed that "the heavens" in the plural is used (ch. viii. 1) of the seat of the Divine majesty itself to which Christ has gone. It is the word *διεληλυθὲς* that determines the meaning here.) The designation, "Jesus the Son of God," draws attention first to the man Jesus who was known by that name in the flesh, and secondly to the "more excellent name," above expatiated on, in virtue of which he "hath passed through the heavens." The conclusion follows that it is the human Jesus, with his humanity, who, being also the Son of God, has so

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"passed through." There may possibly (as some think) be an intention of contrasting him with Joshua (*Ἰησοῦς*, ver. 8), who won the entrance into the typical rest. But it is not necessary to suppose this; vers. 8 and 14 are at too great a distance from each other to suggest a connection of thought between them; and besides *Ἰησοῦς* occurred similarly at the end of ch. iii. 1, before any mention of Joshua. The epithet *μέγαν* after *ἀρχιερέα* distinguishes Christ from all other high priests (cf. ch. xiii. 20, *τὸν ποιμένα τῶν προβάτων τὸν μέγαν*). The high priest of the Law passed through the veil to the earthly symbol of the eternal glory; the "great High Priest" has passed through the heavens to the eternal glory itself. As to *ἐμολογίας*, cf. on ch. iii. 1. In consideration of having such a High Priest, who, as is expressed in what follows, can both sympathize and succour, the readers are exhorted to "hold fast," not only their inward faith, but their "confession" of it before men. A besetting danger of the Hebrew Christians was that of shrinking from a full and open confession under the influence of gainsaying or persecution.

Ver. 15.—For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all things tempted like as we are, without sin. The power of sympathy (*συμπαθείας*) of our great High Priest is not adduced to distinguish him from other high priests, but to express, in this respect, his resemblance to them; community of nature and feeling with those for whom he mediates being essential to the conception of a high priest (see ver. 2). The sequence of thought is, "Let us hold fast our confession, not moved from it by the thought of the superhuman greatness of this High Priest of ours, who hath passed through the heavens; for he can still sympathize with our infirmities (*ἀσθενείας*), having undergone our trials." *Ἀσθένεια* in the New Testament denotes both bodily infirmity, such as disease (cf. Matt. viii. 17; Luke v. 15; John v. 5; xi. 4; Acts xxviii. 9; 1 Tim. v. 23), and also the general weakness of human nature as opposed to Divine power, *δύναμις* (cf. Rom. viii. 26; 1 Cor. xv. 23; 2 Cor. xii. 5, 9; xiii. 4). St. Paul seems to have had regard to *ἀσθένεια* in a comprehensive sense—including chronic malady (his "thorn in the flesh"), liability to calamities, "fear and trembling," temptation to sin—when he spoke (2 Cor. xii. 5, 9) of glorying in his infirmities that the power of Christ might rest upon him. With all human *ἀσθενείας*, of whatever kind, Christ can sympathize in virtue of his own human experience: "Himself took our infirmities (*ἀσθενείας*) and bare our sicknesses" (Matt. viii. 17); "himself

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ἡτοιμασθῆναι ἐξ ἀδολεσείας, though he now lives *ἐκ συνθέσεως Θεοῦ* (2 Cor. xiii. 4). The latter part of the verse corresponds in meaning with ch. ii. 18, but with further delineation of the temptation undergone by Christ. The concluding *χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας* (best taken in connection with *καθ' ὁμοιότητα*, which it immediately follows, rather than with *κατὰ νόμον*) is not a categorical assertion of Christ's sinlessness, though it implies it, but an exclusion of the idea of sin from the likeness spoken of. His temptation was after the likeness of ours, "apart from sin," or "sin except." For similar expressions, though not with definite reference to temptation, cf. ch. ix. 28; vii. 26. But how is the exception of sin to be understood? Is it that, though, like us, tempted, he, unlike us, resisted temptation? Or is it that his sinless nature was incapable of being even solicited by sin? Now, the verb *πειράζεσθαι* means sometimes "to tempt to sin," as Satan or our own lusts tempt us (cf. 1 Cor. vii. 5; 1 Thess. iii. 5; Jas. i. 13, etc.); and also "to prove," "to try," "to test faithfulness," as in 1 Cor. x. 13; ch. xi. 37, etc., in which sense, with reference especially to afflictive trials, the noun *πειρασμός* is commonly used (cf. Luke viii. 13; xxii. 18; Acts xx. 19; Gal. iv. 14; 1 Pet. iv. 12; Jas. i. 12). That Christ was not only subjected to *πειρασμός* in this latter sense, but was also directly assailed by the tempter to sin (*ὁ πειράζων*), appears from the Gospel record. But here comes in a difficulty. There can, we conceive, be no real temptation where there is no liability to the sin suggested by temptation, still less where there is no possibility of sinning. But can we imagine any such liability, or even possibility, in the case of the Divine and Sinless One? If not, wherein did the temptation consist? How could it be at all like ours, or one through his own experience of which he can sympathize with us? It was for maintaining, on the strength of such considerations, the theoretic peccability of Christ, that Irving was expelled as heretical from the Presbyterian communion. The question has undoubtedly its serious difficulties in common with the whole sub-

ject of the Divine and human in Christ. The following thoughts may, however, aid solution. That Christ, in his human nature, partook of all the original affections of humanity—hope, fear, desire, joy, grief, indignation, shrinking from suffering, and the like—is apparent, not only from his life, but also from the fact that his assumption of our humanity would have otherwise been incomplete. Such affections are not in themselves sinful; they only are so when, under temptation, any of them become inordinate, and serve as motives to transgression of duty. He, in virtue of his Divine personality, could not through them be seduced into sin; but it does not follow that he could not, in his human nature, feel their power to seduce, or rather the power of the tempter to seduce through them, and thus have personal experience of man's temptation. St John says of one "born of God" that he "doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John iii. 9). He does not mean that the regenerate Christian is not exposed to, and does not feel, the power of temptation; only that, so far forth as he lives in the new life from God, he is proof against it; he gives no internal assent to the seduction of the tempter; and so "that wicked one toucheth him not" (ver. 18). What is thus said of one "born of God" may be said much more, and without any qualification, of the Son of God, without denying that he too experienced the power of temptation, though altogether proof against it. Bengel says, "*Quomodo autem, sine peccato tentatus, compati potest tentatis cum peccato?* In intellectu multo acrius anima salvatoris percepit imagines tentantes quam nos infirmi: in voluntate tam celeriter incursum earum retudit quam ignis aquae guttulam sibi objectam. Expertus est igitur qua virtute sit opus ad tentationes vincendas. Compati potest nam et sine peccato, et tamen vere est tentatus."

Ver. 16.—*Let us therefore come boldly (literally, with boldness) unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—11.—*The gospel rest.* In this passage the writer explains what is to be understood by the "rest" to which God had invited his ancient people, and urges the Hebrews of his own day to strive to attain it as the most Divine of all blessings.

I. THE REST OF GOD. "His rest" (ver. 1); "my rest" (vers. 3, 6). Rest belongs essentially to God, for he is all-perfect and self-harmonious. Being infinite in purity and love, in knowledge and power, he is the God of peace, and dwells in undisturbed repose. The rest of God is mirrored in the institution of the sabbath (ver. 4), which commemorates his satisfaction at the close of his world-making, when he saw that his works "answered his great idea," and were "very good." God's own sabbath rest "is

the substratum and basis of all peace and rest—the pledge of an ultimate and satisfactory purpose in creation” (Dr. Saphir).

II. **THE REST OF GOD PROMISED TO MAN.** This “promise” (ver. 1) is the result of God’s fatherly love. For man, although he has fallen from his rest, is still the child of God, beloved in spite of his sad apostasy, and pitied on account of his weary moiling in the pursuits of sin. The sabbath instituted at the creation was not this rest (vers. 3—5), but only a sign and seal of it. Neither did the possession of the promised land involve the realization of the promised rest (vers. 6—8); for Israel had never for any time a restful life in Canaan, and King David, nearly five hundred years after the Hebrew occupation, speaks of entrance into God’s rest as a blessing which was still future (vers. 7, 8). However, the settlement of Israel in the land flowing with milk and honey was an adumbration of the gospel rest. And thus God himself said of Zion, “This is my rest for ever.”

III. **THE REST OF GOD REALIZED IN CHRIST.** The Lord Jesus is the Joshua of our confession. He was indeed the Hope of the Jewish Church also in the time of the first Joshua, whether the people realized him to be such or not. If we follow him as our “Leader and Commander,” our hearts, even in this weary, changeful world, will enter into true spiritual rest (ver. 3). Christ brings us rest from guilt, rest from self-righteous striving, rest from wants, rest from fears, rest amidst life’s burdens. In his “obedience unto death” he laboured and was heavy laden that he might give us rest. If we stay our minds on him, we shall be “kept in perfect peace;” if we trust in him, we shall learn to rejoice that “the lines are fallen unto us in pleasant places, and that we have a goodly heritage.”

IV. **THE REST OF GOD CONSUMMATED IN HEAVEN.** Although God has provided for us even in this world perfect rest in Christ, the limitation of our nature prevents us meanwhile from fully enjoying it; and our besetting sins may continue until the end to disturb our tranquillity. But in the heavenly world the saints shall be set free for ever from sin and temptation, from anxiety and sorrow. They shall enter there into the perfect sabbath-rest of God, and shall dwell in it throughout eternity (ver. 9). His love shall abide upon his people, and their perfected love to him shall spring up within them unto everlasting life.

In conclusion, if we would acquire and possess this inheritance, we must: 1. Cherish godly “fear” (ver. 1). 2. Cultivate faith in Christ (ver. 3). 3. Be “united by faith with them that hear” (ver. 2)—the Calebs and the Joshuas. 4. “Give diligence to enter into” the eternal rest (ver. 11) by “following the Lord fully.”

Vers. 12, 13.—*The power of the Divine Word.* The writer urges here that if the Word of God condemned the unbelieving Jews in the Sinaitic desert, it will judge and condemn us also, should we prove unfaithful. The original reference is, of course, not to the written Word; but, in applying the passage to ourselves, we can think only of the promises and warnings of Holy Scripture.

I. **A DESCRIPTION OF THE WORD OF GOD.** (Ver. 12.) The representation is very vivid and impressive. The Word is, as it were, a magistrate; it judges actions, sifts motives, pronounces sentences. As such it is: 1. *Living.* It is “the breath of his lips”—God-breathed; and so it is never “a dead letter,” but always quick with spiritual life, and ready to quicken. What Luther said of Paul’s writings is true of all Scripture: its words “are not dead words; they are living creatures, and have hands and feet.” 2. *Energetic.* The actual power of the Word is as great as the authority which it claims. It is, indeed, the supreme power among men. In the moral sphere it dominates the thought of the world. To the individual soul it is like “a fire” and “a hammer.” It is “sharper than any two-edged sword”—two-edged, because it both punishes as a sword and heals as a surgeon’s knife. 3. *Heart-dissecting.* The Word pierces into the deepest recesses of man’s being. It pricks men in their hearts. It parts “soul and spirit,” “joints and marrow;” i.e. it separates the animal soul from the angel-spirit in human nature. It gives sensibility and power to the heavenward side of our being; and enables us to distinguish what in us is carnal and must be subdued. It marks off to the believer’s consciousness “the works of the flesh” from “the fruit of the Spirit.” 4. *All-discerning.* The sacred writers evince a profounder knowledge of human nature than even Shakespeare or Goethe. God’s Word is the touchstone of

character. Rather it is an eye which detects the true spiritual condition of every one upon whom it gazes. That awful eye never closes. It reads the most secret thoughts and desires of the soul, and pronounces judgment upon the impenitent for doom. Even the manner in which a man treats the promises and threatenings of the Bible shows what that man is.

"Eye of God's Word! where'er we turn,
Ever upon us! Thy keen gaze
Can all the depths of sin discern,
Unravel every bosom's maze.

"Who that has felt thy glance of dread
Thrill through his heart's remotest cells,
About his path, about his bed,
Can doubt what spirit in thee dwells?"

(Keble.)

II. THE SECRET OF ITS POWER. (Ver. 13.) Holy Scripture is thus energetic and efficacious because it is the Word of the Omniscient. It derives from him "who knows what is in man" its subtle insight into character, and its deep hold upon the world's life. The all-seeing Judge, "with whom we have to do," has invested his Word with its marvellous magisterial power. As the teachings of Scripture are an exact transcript of the nature and will of God, even the bare Word itself exercises as a Book transcendent moral influence over men. But, when accompanied with the supernatural energy of the Holy Spirit, upon which it depends for its efficacy as a means of grace, Holy Scripture becomes the very omnipotence of the Omnipotent, to arouse, convict, and condemn, as well as to comfort, sanctify, and save.

CONCLUSION. 1. *Let ministers "preach the Word."* The faithful exhibition of the truth will lay bare the hearts of those who hear, and sometimes so thoroughly that individuals will conclude that their experiences must have been reported beforehand to the preacher. And without solid spiritual instruction no Church will receive blessing or power. 2. *Let all hearers of the gospel "tremble at the Word."* Every human heart should submit with holy awe to its inspection, and allow its teachings to determine belief, mould character, and control conduct.

Vers. 14—16.—*Christ's sympathy and help.* This passage is one of the great sign-posts of the Epistle. In ch. i., ii. the writer has discussed the superiority of Christ as a King to angels; and in ch. iii., iv. his superiority as a Prophet to Moses. He now proceeds to discourse more at length of his superiority as a Priest to Aaron.

I. A TWOFOLD STATEMENT OF DOCTRINE. This double statement concerns the cardinal truth of the Saviour's priesthood. 1. *Its outer aspect.* (Ver. 14.) Fallen, sinful man needs a priest to act for him before God, and the world has sought for one long and earnestly. The Jewish religion embodied an elaborate priesthood; and its types have at length been stereotyped under the Christian dispensation. Every believer is now a priest unto God; and Jesus Christ is the Arch-Priest of the Church. The author here encourages the Hebrew converts to steadfastness, by reminding them of the reality and majesty of Christ's priesthood. He is "a great High Priest"—the Archetype and Antitype of the Jewish pontiff. His majesty appears when we consider: (1) *Where he is.* He "hath passed through the heavens." Aaron went once a year through the blue veil into the *sanctum sanctorum* of the tabernacle; but our High Priest, after offering up himself as an expiatory sacrifice in the outer court of this world, has passed through the blue curtain of the sky into the heaven of heaven. He sits officially at the right hand of God, wearing both the priestly mitre and the kingly diadem. (2) *Who he is.* "Jesus, the Son of God." His greatness is personal, as well as official. He is a real man, bearing the human name, Jesus; but he is at the same time the true God, the possessor of a Divine and eternal sonship. 2. *Its inner aspect.* (Ver. 15.) This verse opens up before us the secret workings of the Redeemer's heart. It speaks of his priestly sympathy. Sympathy is a great power in human life. It bulks so largely that an eminent Scottish thinker, Adam Smith, makes it the basis of his whole system of morals. Now, says the apostle, the Saviour's unparalleled greatness does not

by any means render him incapable of sympathy. Although he has passed through the heavens, "heaven lies about us," and thus he is very near us. Although he left the world nineteen hundred years ago, he is yet "with us always." Although he is the Son of God, he has a human soul—a soul intensely human—which underwent a complete curriculum of trial, and graduated to its glory through suffering. Although he was "without sin," his earthly life was a life of constant temptation, as well as of constant and culminating sorrow because of sin. So he is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities"—our infirmities of health, of temper, of devotion, of resolution, of service. He knows experimentally the precise force of every evil suggestion which may try us. As the Head of the Church, he is its great Nerve-centre; and he that toucheth any one of his people "toucheth the apple of his eye."

II. A TWOFOLD ENFORCEMENT OF DUTY. The double exhortation corresponds to the two aspects of the doctrine respectively. The apostle exhorts to: 1. *Steadfast confession*. (Ver. 14.) The early Hebrew Christians found it very difficult openly to confess Christ; for their unbelieving countrymen treated all who did so as renegades from Israel, and apostates from Israel's God. But fidelity to the truth was necessary then, and it is equally necessary now. Every believer is bound publicly to confess Christ. He must do so for Christ's sake, for his own sake, and for the sake of his fellow-men. 2. *Constant supplication*. (Ver. 16.) To the universe at large God's throne is a throne of majesty; to sinners, it is a throne of judgment; to believers, the presence of Christ at God's right hand makes it a "throne of grace." And the thought of our High Priest's tender sympathy should fill us with holy confidence to go daily and hourly into the Divine presence for the supplies which we need. What a joy to know that we have a Friend at court, and that he is our Sovereign's Son! As often as we look up to his open, loving face, we may use all "liberty of speech" in asking pardoning mercy for the past and helping grace for the future.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*Fear of failing to realize the promised rest*. "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left," etc. Let us notice—

I. THE GREAT PROMISE. "A promise being left of entering into his rest." Later in the chapter (vers. 6—9) the writer shows from the Old Testament that such a promise was left to Christians. The rest promised is God's rest—"his rest;" because: 1. *It corresponds with his*. (1) It is not the rest of inactivity, but of harmonious activities. "My Father," said Christ, "worketh hitherto, and I work." The highest rest is not in quiescence, but in unwearying and joyful endeavours; and it is illustrated, not by the stillness and silence of the sepulchre, but by the swift and serene movements of the planets.

"Absence of occupation is not rest;
A mind quite vacant is a mind distressed."

(Cowper.)

Robertson well says, "In creation the rest of God is exhibited as a sense of power which nothing wearies." (2) It is not material, but spiritual; not of the senses, but of the soul. He who has this rest will have peace in his spirit even when sorely pained in his body. Like St. Paul, he may be enabled even to glory in physical "infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon" him. (3) It is not in circumstances, but in the being. Circumstances are variable, uncertain, unreliable; no real and abiding rest can spring from them or depend upon them. But the rest which is promised in the sacred Word is not dependent upon circumstances or upon any outward things. It is a deep inward rest even amidst outward conflict.

"And central peace subsisting at the heart
Of endless agitation."

(Wordsworth.)

"These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation," etc. 2. *It is conferred by him*. God is the Giver of this rest. He bestows it (1) through the mediation of his Son Jesus Christ. Through him he

removes the hindrances to this rest; e.g. guilt, servile fear, distrust of God, etc. And he inspires the spiritual conditions and constituents of this rest; e.g. the assurance of pardon, the possession of peace, the exercise of confidence in God, etc. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," etc.; "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you," etc. God bestows this rest (2) by the agency of his Holy Spirit. He brings the redemptive powers of the gospel into relation with the hearts of men. "He shall take of mine," said our Lord, "and shall declare it unto you." How great and gracious is this promise!

II. THE GRAVE POSSIBILITY. "Lest any one of you should seem to have come short of it." The grave possibility is that when the great testing-time shall come any one should be found without a personal participation in the promised rest. The word "seem" does not indicate the apparent as distinguished from the real; but is, as Alford says, "a mild term, conveying indeed a sterner intimation behind it." But how should any one come short of the promised rest? Clearly by unbelief, even as the Israelites who left Egypt came short of the rest of Canaan. To these Hebrew Christians there was more than a possibility of the failure of their faith in Jesus Christ. His system had no imposing ceremonial, no pomp or pageantry to commend it, as Judaism had. He himself was despised and rejected by the conventionally and officially great and noble, and was condemned and crucified. The claims of Christianity upon the acceptance of men were spiritual, and could only be spiritually discerned. Hence the danger of those to whom the text was primarily addressed. And still men are in danger of coming short of the attainment of the great promise. This peril arises from the temptation to seek satisfaction in visible and material things rather than in invisible and spiritual things; or to seek for ease and happiness rather than for peace and rest; or to seek for rest in the creature rather than in the Creator. Or the danger may arise from the temptation to absorption in present pursuits without due consideration of their relation to the future and the eternal.

III. THE SOLEMN EXHORTATION. "Let us therefore fear," etc. This fear is not synonymous with dread or terror; but it indicates a humble, reverent, watchful, prayerful spirit. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," etc. How would this fear guard one against coming short of the promised rest? 1. *This fear is the antithesis and corrective of self-will and presumption.* In humility there is security. "Gird yourselves with humility; for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." 2. *This fear will lead to wariness and watchfulness.* It will incite to the exercise of caution and care. 3. *This fear will lead to distrust of self and confidence in God.* "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence; and his children shall have a place of refuge." And he who puts his trust in God shall not fail to attain unto the promised rest. "Let us therefore fear, lest," etc.—W. J.

Ver. 3.—*Rest a present possession of the Christian believer.* "For we which have believed do enter into rest." The use of the present tense here ("do enter") has caused some difficulty to some expositors. Alford explains the text thus, that they are to enter into the rest who at the time of the fulfilment of the promise shall be found to have believed. Stuart points out that in "the idiom of the Bible, the *present* tense is often used as a *universal* tense, embracing time past, present, and future." It is indisputable that the words of the text, taken alone, suggest the subject which is stated above. And if further justification of our application of the text be needed, we may adduce two facts. 1. That our Lord promises rest—and, as we understand him, present rest—to those who believe in him (Matt. xi. 28—30). 2. That faith in the Lord Jesus Christ admits the soul into rest here and now is a fact of Christian consciousness. So we proceed to consider the rest which is the present privilege and possession of those who intelligently and heartily believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. REST FROM THE GUILT AND BURDEN OF SIN IS ATTAINED BY FAITH IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. He reveals the infinite mercy of God towards the sinner. He delivers those who trust him from the condemnation of the holy Law which they have broken (John iii. 14—18; Rom. viii. 1). He freely and fully forgave the sinners who penitently approached unto him (Matt. ix. 2; Luke vii. 48—50). He imparts freedom from the bondage of sin (John viii. 31—36; Rom. vi. 12—22). And from this forgiveness and freedom from sin there follows rest from the dread of the punishment

of sin. Thus, as regards the guilt and bondage and punishment of sin, they who believe in the Saviour "do enter into rest."

II. REST FROM THE PRESSURE OF TEMPORAL ANXIETIES IS ATTAINED BY FAITH IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. There is much of mental disquietude and distress amongst men as to the possibilities of their physical life and their temporal circumstances. What if their health should fail! if heavy losses should befall them! if gaunt poverty or dreary destitution should overtake them! Now, our Lord's teaching as to the paternal providence of God, when it is truly believed, delivers the soul from these distressing apprehensions and corroding cares (see Matt. vi. 25—34; x. 29—31; Luke xii. 6, 7, 22—31).

III. REST FROM THE DISTURBANCE AND DISTRESS OF SELF-WILL IS ATTAINED BY FAITH IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. Much of life's unrest and sorrow springs from the absence of acquiescence in the will of God; much of positive distress arises from the opposition of our will to his holy will. Faith in our Lord delivers from this. His revelation of the Divine fatherhood, when it is heartily accepted, leads to acquiescence in the Father's will, and that is rest, as he himself teaches (Matt. xi. 25—30). We are led into the truth that

"Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours, to make them thine."

(Tennyson.)

And then into the higher experience of

"The heart at rest
When all without tumultuous seems—
That trusts a higher will, and deems
That higher will, not mine, the best.

"O blessed life—heart, mind, and soul,
From self-born aims and wishes free,
In all at one with Deity,
And loyal to the Lord's control."

(Matson.)

IV. REST FROM UNSATISFIED AFFECTIONS IS ATTAINED BY FAITH IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. One of the deepest needs of the human heart is to love and to be loved in return. Unreciprocated and misdirected affections cause some of the bitterest griefs of human life. Our Lord summons us to set our supreme affections upon God (Mark xii. 29, 30). As the Object of our highest and holiest love, God satisfies, inspires, and delights the soul; for he is supremely good and beautiful. He reciprocates our affections; he is unchangeable, and he ever liveth.

"Oh for that choicest blessing
Of living in thy love,
And thus on earth possessing
The peace of heaven above!
Oh for the bliss that by it
The soul securely knows,
The holy calm and quiet
Of faith's serene repose!"

(Monsell.)

V. REST FROM THE SOREST SORROWS OF BEREAVEMENT AND FROM THE DREAD OF DEATH IS ATTAINED BY FAITH IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. Concerning our beloved departed, "Jesus saith, Thy brother shall rise again. . . . I am the Resurrection and the Life," etc. He has taken the sting from death and the victory from the grave (1 Cor. xv. 54—57). "Our Saviour Jesus Christ abolished death, and brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel." And now to the genuine Christian

"There is no death! What seems so is transition.
This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the life elysian,
Whose portal we call death."

(Longfellow)

To enter into and enjoy this spiritual rest is a privilege available to us here and now. "For we which have believed do enter into that rest."—W. J.

Ver. 9.—*Rest a future portion of the Christian believer.* "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." We have already spoken of the rest which is the present privilege of the Christian: "We which have believed do enter into that rest." But that does not satisfy all our desire and aspiration. We crave a deeper, fuller, more perfect rest than we enjoy here. The higher life at present is one of intense and, at times, almost painful longing. Without the prospect of something better than our present best, our life would not be satisfactory. "There remaineth therefore a rest [a keeping of sabbath] for the people of God." This rest which is reserved is richer, fuller, more glorious than that which is at present realized. The words used to express them suggest this. The chief meaning of *kardawois* (ver. 3) is cessation, as from work, pain, etc. The rest which it indicates is mainly negative. But *σαββατισμὸς* (ver. 9) indicates a sabbath festal celebration, a holy keeping of sabbath; it comprises the rest of ver. 8 and considerably more. Let us consider what this sabbath rest which remains for the people of God consists in.

I. IN THE ABSENCE OF ALL THOSE DISTURBING INFLUENCES WHICH CHARACTERIZE OUR PRESENT STATE. This is the negative aspect of the rest, or what we shall rest from. 1. *Rest from the struggle against sin.* The people of God in heaven are more than conquerors over sin and Satan "through him that loved" them. The great tempter, and solicitation to sin, will be entirely and eternally excluded from that bright and blessed world. "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth," etc. 2. *Rest from suffering, both physical and mental.* "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more" (Rev. vii. 16, 17). "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." "And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes," etc. (Rev. xxi. 4). 3. *Rest from the mystery and burden of life.* In our present state there are seasons of darkness and perplexity when trust and hope in God involve painful effort to some souls. Such efforts will not be demanded in the blessed hereafter. Much that to us is now obscure will then be perfectly clear. The pure light of eternity will chase away the grim shadows of time; and what is to us unknown in heaven will awaken neither dread nor doubt. 4. *Rest from toilsome, anxious, discouraging labour.* No more men and women and children compelled to labour on long after their physical powers are tired out. No more forcing of the brain to continued effort when it already aches wearily by reason of its toils. No further summons to works of social or moral amelioration, which must be prosecuted despite difficulty, discouragement, opposition, and seeming failure. The sabbath rest which remaineth for the people of God precludes all these things.

II. IN THE PRESENCE OF ALL THE HARMONIOUS AND BLESSED CONDITIONS AND CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH OUR NATURE CRAVES. This is the positive aspect of our rest, or what we shall rest in. 1. *In the conformity of our character to that of God.* Purity is peace. Holiness is rest. The perfectly holy is the infinitely and ever-blessed God. The saints in heaven "have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Nor is their holiness the mere negation of moral evil, but a positive and active condition of their being. Their thoughts, sympathies, aspirations, services, are all true and pure and benevolent. They are spiritually transformed into the image of the Lord. And in this there is rest and blessedness. "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." 2. *In the progress of our being towards God.* Stagnation is not rest. Stationariness is not rest; it is stillness, inaction, but not rest. But harmonious growth is both restful and joyous. One of the constituents of the future rest of the good is growth—growth in mind and heart and spirit, in thought, and affection, and reverence, and holy action. In endless approximation to the infinitely Holy One will man find the rest and perfection of his being. 3. *In the continuous service of God.* As this rest is a "keeping of sabbath," it cannot mean a complete cessation of activity. Inactivity is not rest. "Sloth yieldeth not happiness; the bliss of a spirit is action."

"An angel's wing would droop if long at rest,
And God himself, inactive, were no longer blest."

So we read of the bright future that "his servants shall serve him, and they shall see

his face." "They are before the throne of God; and they serve him day and night in his temple." T. Aquinas speaks of this service as *videre, amare, et laudare*. But it must not be limited to these exercises. Enough for us to know that there will be services for us to render—continuous services, blessed services, and all of them in the service of our God. The rest and joy of this service will appear if we consider: (1) Its inspiration. Love to God is the impulse of every action, and transforms every duty into a delight. (2) Its nature. Every service will be sacred. The spirit in which it is done will make all the work religious, worshipful. (3) Its conditions. Freedom from all obstruction, from all restraint, and from all fatigue. 4. *In conscious and continuous communion with God*. "He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, their God. . . . And they shall see his face." "We shall see him even as he is." All the redeemed in heaven are through Christ perfectly one with God in sympathies, purposes, principles, and joys. God alone can satisfy them. In him they rest with deepest, holiest blessedness. They are "for ever with the Lord." "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." This rest is "reserved for the people of God." Only the sincere and hearty believers in Jesus Christ will ever enter upon it. The character of the rest is conclusive as to this question. To experience the perfect rest of the glorious future we must first experience the spiritual rest which is available unto us at present.—W. J.

Ver. 12.—*Characteristics of the sacred Scriptures*. "For the Word of God is quick and powerful" etc. We take "the Word of God" here as meaning the sacred Scriptures, and the text as presenting to our notice several characteristics of them.

I. THE VITALITY OF GOD'S WORD. "The Word of God is quick," or, "living." Sometimes the written Word is spoken of as a "dead letter;" but with at least equal propriety it may be spoken of as a "living Word." "The Word of God, which liveth and abideth. For all flesh is as grass," etc. (1 Pet. i. 23—25). We mention three evidences of the vitality of the Word of God. 1. *Its continued and unimpaired existence notwithstanding innumerable, persistent, and powerful assaults*. If these writings had not been instinct with a Divine life they would have been destroyed long ere this. 2. *Its adaptation to all ages and all peoples*. This book is as true and living for us to-day as it was for the men of the second century of our era; it is as applicable to the European as to the Asiatic. 3. *Its inexhaustible interest*. Like God's book of nature, it is endless in its significance and undiminishing in its attractiveness. Dr. Payne Smith has well said, "For nearly eighteen centuries men have thought and written upon that one Book, and if for eighteen more centuries men so write, yet will there still remain much that calls for fresh examination and fuller inquiry; new knowledge to be won, old truths to be better and more fully understood. The books of men have their day, and then grow obsolete. God's Word is like himself, 'the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.' Time passes over it, but it ages not. Its power is as fresh as if God spake it but yesterday."

II. THE ENERGY OF GOD'S WORD. "Quick, and powerful," or active, or energizing. This power is seen: 1. *In the conviction of men of sin*. "Is not my Word like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" Its exhibition of infinite mercy has melted many a stubborn soul into genuine penitence. 2. *In the conversion of sinners*. "The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." It is the instrument of spiritual regeneration. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth." 3. *In the correction of faults and errors*. "Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction," etc. 4. *In the consolation of the mourner*. " whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope." "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men edification, and comfort, and consolation." "Comfort one another with these words." 5. *In the sanctification of the believer*. "Sanctify them in the truth: thy Word is truth." "Ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you." "Sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word." "Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth."

III. THE PENETRATION OF GOD'S WORD. "And sharper than any two-edged sword,"

etc. The Word of God is frequently compared to a sword. "The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." And to a two-edged sword. "Out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword." "As it is from the mouth that man's word proceeds; so this sword, not wielded in the hand, but proceeding from the mouth of the Son of God, is his Word (cf. Isa. xlix. 2)." Here are two suggestions concerning the penetration of God's Word. 1. *It searches the whole of man's nature.* The "soul," i.e. man's animal soul; "spirit," i.e. man's religious spirit. By the former he is related to the brute creation; by the latter he is related to angels and to God himself, who is the "Father of spirits." The Word enters the heart and makes an impression there; it pierces through even to the spirit, and works mightily there. It divides "both joints and marrow;" it investigates the most interior and hidden parts of man's being. 2. *It searches the whole of man's nature most rigorously.* "Even to the dividing of soul and spirit;" not dividing the soul from the spirit, but dividing the soul itself and the spirit itself. This Word is not as an ordinary sword, but is "sharper than any two-edged sword;" and it does not as an ordinary sword cut to the bone, but through the bones and through the innermost marrow. So thoroughly and rigorously does the Word of God search man's moral nature.

IV. THE DISCRIMINATION OF GOD'S WORD. "And is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." It exercises a critical and separating power upon the thoughts and ideas, opinions and principles, of the heart. And it discovers to men the true moral character of their thoughts and intents, their opinions and principles. The Word of God frequently reveals man to himself. "The Bible," says Dr. Parker, "exposes the very innermost recesses of human nature; sets a light where no other hand ever placed a candle; lights up the pathways of our most secret life and thought; and we begin to feel that the book we must shut up when we are going to do evil is *God's Book*. This is the great hold, the sovereign mastery, which the Book of God has over the ages—that it knows us; that it gives articulation to our dumb reproaches; that it puts into the best words the things we reap against ourselves and cannot fully explain. *Isaiah* knows us; *Jeremiah* has analyzed and dissected and anatomized us. If any man would know the human heart, he must read the human heart in *God's Book*."

"The sacred page
With calm attention scan! If on thy soul,
As thou dost read, a ray of purer light
Break in—oh, check it not; give it full scope!
Admitted, it will break the clouds which long
Have dimmed thy sight, and lead thee, till at last,
Convictions, like the sun's meridian beams,
Illuminate thy mind."

(Samuel Hayea.)

W. J.

Ver. 13.—*The omniscience of God.* "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest," etc.

I. THE UNIVERSALITY OF GOD'S KNOWLEDGE. "There is no creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things," etc. All created things, high and low, great and small, visible and invisible, are comprehended in this word "creature." "His understanding is infinite." Nothing is too great for his comprehension; nothing too small for his notice (Ps. l. 11); nothing too hidden for his penetration (Ps. cxxxix. 11, 12).

II. THE MINUTENESS AND EXHAUSTIVENESS OF GOD'S KNOWLEDGE. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him," etc. 1. *He sees all things as they really are.* "All things are naked unto" his eyes. He beholds them without any covering or disguise. Things and persons are cloaked, concealed, and made to appear other than they are amongst men; but none of these things can impose upon him. 2. *He sees all things thoroughly, completely.* "All things are naked and opened unto," etc.; Revised Version, "laid open before the eyes," etc. The word rendered "opened" is a difficult one. Alford adopts the meaning "to lay prostrate." He says, "This is the simplest and most frequent sense in the classical writers. I regard the word as signifying entire prostration and subjugation under the eye

of God; not only naked, stripped of all covering and concealment, but also laid prostrate in their exposure before his eye." He translates, "lying open unto." Ebrard adopts the interpretation, "to bend any one's neck backwards, and thereby to lay bare the throat; hence in general, to lay bare." Others interpret it to lay open, as a body, by an anatomist, or as an animal by a sacrificing priest. But whatever may be the exact figure, the meaning conveyed by the figure is quite clear, viz. that God knows all things thoroughly (cf. Job xxxi. 4; xxxiv. 21; Ps. lvi. 8; cxxxix. 1—5; Prov. v. 21; xv. 11; Jer. xvii. 10).

III. THE SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S KNOWLEDGE TO MAN. He is the God "with whom we have to do." Not "unto whom we must render our account." The clause expresses a more comprehensive relation than that. It expresses "our whole concern and relation with God." The Divine omniscience has very important practical bearings upon us. 1. *As an effectual rebuke to the pride which springs from knowledge or from intellectual attainments.* Compared with the knowledge of "him with whom we have to do," what does the most intelligent man know? "We are but of yesterday, and know nothing." 2. *As a check upon sin, whether in thought and feeling, or in word and action.* (See Job xxxiv. 21, 22; Ps. xc. 8; Eccles. xii. 14.) 3. *As an encouragement to trust in him.* (See 2 Chron. xvi. 9; Matt. vi. 32; x. 29—31.) 4. *As a great consolation when misinterpreted or slandered.* (See Job xvi. 19; xxxiii. 10; Ps. xxxvii. 5, 6.) 5. *As a great comfort and support in affliction and trial.* (See Ps. lxxviii. 39; ciii. 13, 14.) 6. *As a guarantee of the triumph of his cause.* His plans were formed with a full knowledge of every possible obstacle or opposition; and they anticipate and provide for the utilization of such opposition for their own furtherance and realization.—W. J.

Ver. 14.—*A summons to steadfastness.* "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest," etc.

I. THE DUTY TO WHICH WE ARE SUMMONED. "Let us hold fast our confession," i.e. of the Christian faith. 1. *Danger of renouncing this confession is implied.* We have already pointed out that these Hebrew Christians were in considerable peril in this respect.¹ This danger arises (1) from opposition from without; or (2) from subtle solicitation, which is more to be dreaded than opposition; or (3) from negligence on our part. 2. *Effort to retain this confession is enjoined.* "Let us hold fast our confession." This includes: (1) Perseverance in the Christian faith; a resolute cleaving to Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord. (2) Perseverance in the Christian fellowship; association with Christian people; frequenting Christian assemblies. (3) Perseverance in the Christian practice; the continued embodiment of Christ's precepts in the life and conduct. This demands effort; e.g. watching, praying, believing, working.

II. THE MOTIVE BY WHICH WE ARE STRENGTHENED. These Hebrew Christians were encouraged to hold fast their confession because they had in Jesus Christ a perfect High Priest. The pre-eminence of his priesthood is adduced as a motive to their perseverance, and to ours. 1. *He is pre-eminent in his office.* "A great High Priest." As Alford expounds, the "one archetypal High Priest—One above all." 2. *He is pre-eminent in his access.* "Who hath passed through the heavens." The Jewish high priest passed behind the veil into the most holy place; but the great High Priest has passed through "the planetary heavens, the heavens of the fixed stars and the angels," unto the very presence and throne of God. "He is gone," says Ebrard, "into the dwelling-place in space of the absolute, finished, absolutely undisturbed revelation of the Father." And he is there as our Representative, and as our Forerunner. This implies the perfection of his work upon earth (cf. ch. i. 3; ix. 12, 24—26). 3. *He is pre-eminent in his Person.* "Jesus the Son of God." Jesus, the gracious and sympathetic Saviour of men. "The Son of God," supreme in dignity, authority, and power. Here, then, is a motive to strengthen us to "hold fast our confession." Our great High Priest is perfect; he knows our difficulties and temptations; he sympathizes with us; he succours us; he is now in the presence of God on our behalf; "he ever liveth to make intercession for us." Let his sympathy and help inspire us to fidelity and perseverance.—W. J.

¹ See our homily on ch. iv. 1.

Ver. 16.—*The Christian's approach to the throne of grace.* "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne," etc. Our text suggests the following observations:—

I. **MAN'S GREAT NEED IS MERCY.** "That we may receive mercy" is our great requirement. This will be obvious if we reflect for a moment on our position in relation to the government of God. Intelligent beings who have maintained their integrity and their loyalty to God, and are fulfilling his design concerning them, do not need mercy. Mercy implies demerit or ill desert on the part of those to whom it is granted. It is the mode of the Divine goodness to the unworthy and the evil. Because we are sinners we require mercy. We have no claim to God's favour; we do not merit the blessings of his goodness; by sin we have forfeited our title to his favour, and have deserved his wrath. "Every sinner stands in need of *forbearing mercy*. The sentence of death is upon all; all are under condemnation. Each sinner stands in need of *preventing mercy*. Inclined to evil from nature and habit, unless held back by preventing grace, he is continually falling into sin. The sinner stands in need of *forgiving mercy*. If he obtain not this, he must perish." All our salvation may be said to flow from the mercy of God. How great, then, is our need of mercy! Without it, we are lost. Having it, we have salvation.

II. **MAN HAS SEASONS OF SPECIAL NEED.** "And find grace to help in time of need." Alford: "Grace to help while yet there is time." Rendall: "Grace for timely help." The meaning is, to find grace for seasonable or opportune help; and thus suggesting the truth that there are seasons when man specially requires the help of Divine grace. We are ever dependent upon the mercy of God; but not unfrequently we are pressed by temptations, or beset by danger, or assailed by dark doubts, or standing in slippery places, and at such times we specially need the mercy and grace of God. 1. *There are times of temptation to sin*, when our moral weakness is extreme, and our spiritual foes are persistent, and the tendency to sin which is within us is roused into activity. In such seasons how pressing is our need of succouring grace! 2. *There are trials arising from worldly prosperity*. Prosperity in temporal affairs has occasioned spiritual injury to many. It brings with it temptations to luxury, and to guilty conformity to the world, and to spiritual sloth, and false security, and presumptuous self-reliance. It is a season of special need. 3. *There are trials arising from temporal adversity*. In the hour of failure and defeat many a good man has felt with Asaph, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain," etc. With poverty there come, sometimes, temptations to reproach God, or to despair of his goodness, or to resort to unlawful or unworthy means to obtain temporal supplies. Hence our need of grace. 4. *There are trials arising from bodily afflictions*. Sanctified sufferings are a blessing; unsanctified, they are only an evil, and a very great evil. If we rebel against the hand that afflicts us, we shall grow hard in heart, bitter in temper, impatient and distrustful, and probably some one will suggest to us that we "curse God, and die." Here is a season of peculiar need. 5. *Trials arising from the bereavements of friendship*. When death comes very near to us, it is accompanied with temptations to doubt the reality of the life beyond, to question the wisdom and love of God, etc. 6. *Trials of our own dying hour*. Great is the mystery which surrounds death. The moment of dissolution must be very solemn. Who can overcome then without "grace for timely help"?

III. **THERE IS A THRONE WHENCE THE MERCY AND GRACE WE NEED MAY BE OBTAINED.** "The throne of grace" is the throne of God; but of God, not as an august and awful Ruler, but as a gracious Father. It is the throne whence he bestows the blessings of mercy and grace to those who seek him. The treasures of his mercy and grace are inexhaustible, and he delights in communicating them to others. We have not to overcome any disinclination to bless us on his part. He gives freely; he gives bountifully; he delights in giving.

IV. **WE HAVE AMPLE ENCOURAGEMENT TO APPROACH THE THRONE OF GRACE.** "Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace." We have freedom of access to the throne, and we may have freedom of speech with him who sits thereon. We may draw near to God with confidence. This we have, or may have, through our great High Priest. He has revealed the infinite love of the Father toward us, and his delight in blessing us; he is the perfect "Mediator between God and man;" he was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin," and he is able "to sympathize with

our infirmities;" and he now wears our nature in heaven by his Father's throne. "Let us therefore draw near with boldness," etc.—W. J.

Vers. 1—11.—*The more terrible result of apostasy from Christ seen in the better rest to which Christ leads.* Still dealing with the superiority of Christ to Moses. Having shown the possibility of departing from Christ as they did from Moses, he goes on to show that, since Christ was greater than Moses, the evil of departing from him was so much more terrible. *There is a Divine promise of rest unexhausted in Old Testament times, and only fulfilled through faith in Christ.* "Let us fear therefore, lest a promise being left of entering into his rest, any one of you should seem to come short of it. For, indeed, we have had good tidings preached unto us, even as also they. But the Word of hearing did not profit them, because it was not united by faith with them that heard. For we which have believed do enter into that rest." *This is proved (as usual) from their own Scriptures.* "Even as he hath said, As I sware in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest, although the works were finished from the foundation of the world." That is, the promised share in God's rest cannot be that after his creative work, for it had not been enjoyed two thousand years after the creation; nor could it be the rest of Canaan, for long after the entrance into Canaan, David, in the ninety-fifth psalm, speaks of it as still unpossessed. "He again defineth," etc. What then? "There remaineth therefore a rest," etc.

I. THE CERTAINTY OF DIVINE REST TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. This is rest on earth, for "we who have believed do," etc. This is also rest in heaven, for "let us labour therefore," etc. But these two are one. Yet so much better is the latter, the believer being ever able to say, "There remaineth a rest," etc., that we refer this mainly to the rest of the eternal world. And this is certain: 1. *Because God continues his work till it is perfected.* "God did rest the seventh day from all his works," because they were complete. It reminds us that God always perfects what he begins—that is a necessity of his nature. Now he has begun his work wherever "repentance toward God, and faith toward," etc., are; then he will perfect it. That makes our future rest certain, for perfection brings rest. Our sabbath must follow our perfection. 2. *Because the promised rest has not yet been reached.* The argument applies to us as to the Hebrews. We may have been persuaded into the Christian life by "Come unto me, and I will give you rest," but our experience is far below what is thus assured to the believer. Where we have most it falls short of the promise. Then the promise has yet to be fulfilled. 3. *Because Christ rests after his redemptive work.* "For he that has entered into his rest"—i.e. Christ—"he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." As the Father rested after his creative work, so did the Son after his work of redemption, and for the same reason. It was because he could say, "It is finished," that "he sat down at," etc. If, then, Christ only rested because he had made our perfect redemption secure, we know we shall enter into rest. The vision of the Redeemer resting from his work conveys the utmost assurance that to his people the blessings of redemption, in their height, and depth, and length, and breadth, are as sure as though they possessed them.

II. THE BLESSIDNESS OF THE DIVINE REST WHICH APPERTAINS TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. The English word "rest" occurs nine times in the context, but in the ninth verse a different Greek word is used, which (as it is said to occur nowhere else in Greek literature except in one passage of Plutarch) may be said to have been coined for the occasion—*sabbatismos*, a sabbath-keeping. No word could convey a deeper sense of rest to the Hebrews; for they had a seventh-day sabbath, and every seventh year a sabbath year, and every seventh seven years of sabbaths the year of jubilee. See here the kind of rest to which Jesus leads his people. 1. *It will be rest in finished labour.* Whatever inward rest his people have now, they have also much outer weariness—weariness of labour, sorrow, conflict, advanced age. Christ leads to rest from this. Rest for the weary brain, the aching heart, the tired feet, the tempted spirit, the weight of years; the world's sounds all hushed, and the world's work laid aside; Sunday morning after the week's toil—a sabbath-keeping. 2. *It will be rest in Divine fellowship.* Rest with God. Not simply life's business suspended and its shops closed, but the multitude gathered in the place of prayer to keep holy day in communion with God. "If they shall enter into my rest." In Christ, God and his people find a common rest. That

Divine fellowship will be the true sabbath-keeping. 3. *It will be rest in holy service.* Sabbath days to his people are days of sacred work. So in heaven "they serve him day and night." One kind of work over, but another taken up, and only in this work will our spirit rest. Doing nothing rests the body, but the heart and mind only rest when their faculties are in full employ. There, lessons to learn, mysteries to comprehend, service to render, attainments to pursue, gifts to receive, talents to expend, and all absorbed in the spirit of worship. God first, last, midst, and without end. What rest that will be—work which never becomes toil, nor seeks repose! That will be sabbath-keeping.

III. *THE FEAR OF LOSING THIS DIVINE REST WHICH SHOULD ANIMATE THE CHURCH.* That the burden of the passage. Its first word, "Let us fear, lest," etc., and its last, "Let us labour," etc. This fear not inconsistent with the certainty of rest to Christ's people, because it is a question whether we have a right to the assurance of his people. Therefore "fear." 1. *The fact of Israel failing to enter Canaan is held up to the Church as a warning.* Even those who had received all the mercies given to ancient Israel could die as outcasts in the wilderness. 2. *The means by which alone that rest can be obtained are clearly defined.* Faith; but faith manifests itself by obedience (ver. 6). See Revised Version. "Faith" and "Obedience" are here used almost interchangeably, as though they were the same. The existence of faith is proved by consecrated life. If the way to rest were manifold, we need not so much fear, but it is one, only one—"faith which worketh." 3. *The blessedness of the promised rest makes failure to reach it the more terrible.* If it were sad to lose the rest of Canaan, what to lose the rest of heaven! What to be for evermore a companion of "sabbathless Satan"!—C. N.

Vers. 12—16.—*The Word of God discovering, the great High Priest delivering from, the apostate's sin.* This completes the argument in this section (ch. iii. and iv.) on the sin of apostasy. Having brought his readers face to face with the awful peril of departure from the Son of God, we might suppose the writer had reached the limit of the subject. But not so; he goes on to say that this sin and doom may be true of some whose defection is hidden in the heart. But he cannot relinquish the subject there. This searching admonition closes with the revelation of the great High Priest, who will deliver those who come to him from the guilt of apostasy. Subject—*The Word of God discovering, the great High Priest delivering from, the apostate's sin.*

I. *THE WORD OF GOD DETECTS AND JUDGES THE SIN OF APOSTASY.* "The Word of God" here probably alludes to that particular word in the ninety-fifth psalm, on which, in both these chapters, the writer has built his argument. 1. *This Word is permanent.* "Quick," i.e. not dead. The Word of threatening to Israel lives still. It has not to do only with a former generation. Time makes no difference to what God has said. His Word never dies; it is as true now as when it was uttered. The principles which underlie the Divine sayings are everlasting. 2. *This Word is efficient.* "Powerful," or active. Its utterances are always followed by corresponding results. Laws in an earthly statute-book may not be executed; he who made them may not have intended to enforce them, or has changed his mind about them, or has lost the power to carry them into effect. It can never be so with the Divine laws. God "is not man, that he should lie, nor the son," etc. . . . "hath he spoken, and shall he not do it?" He is always in one mind, and nothing can change him. Men forget that because of his long-suffering; but it is true. 3. *This Word is destructive.* "Sharper than," etc. To divide the soul from the spirit is equal to the parting of the body from the spirit; it is another expression for "to produce death." And this is said to be in the most painful way. Nothing could produce intenser pain or more certain death than the "dividing asunder of the joints and marrow." The figure declares that the threatenings of God will be executed with an awful intensity of suffering and completeness of destruction. 4. *This Word is penetrating.* "Quick to discern," etc. (the sudden transition from the penetrating power of the Word to that of God is natural. The habitual thought of Scripture in this Epistle is that of a direct Divine utterance; God and his Word are one). "Naked, and laid open," paraphrased by "turned inside out." Its demands have as much to do with heart as life, with principles as

doings. There may be no outward departure, but inner backsliding; and if so, the Word discovers and judges it.

II. FROM THE SIN OF APOSTASY OUR HIGH PRIEST IS ABLE TO DELIVER US. How delightful to be able to turn from the preceding to this: "Having a great, etc.!" From the fears excited we are bidden to look up to our Priest-King in the heavens. 1. *The guilt of apostasy needs atonement.* That need is met in the vision of Jesus as High Priest passed within the veil, to present on our behalf the blood of sprinkling, which cries for and secures mercy. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth," etc. 2. *The temptation to apostasy needs help.* That need, also, is met in the vision of Jesus as High Priest, Intercessor. He bears no jewelled names on his breast, but his people's names are graven on those hands ever stretched toward the throne in prayer. "Simon, Simon, Satan hath," etc. Therefore "let us hold fast." 3. *The resistance of apostasy needs sympathy.* To refuse to be unfaithful often brings suffering. To cleave to Christ meant to these Hebrews the spoiling of their goods, etc. The need that brings solace and help is also met in the vision of Christ as High Priest. The "yet without sin" draws him nearer; for, to maintain a sinless heart and character, he must have experienced the keenest pains of self-crucifixion and temptation, and therefore knows this suffering at its greatest, and "is able to succour those," etc.

III. TO OBTAIN OUR HIGH PRIEST'S DELIVERING HELP WE MUST DRAW NEAR TO THE THRONE OF GRACE. 1. *He who has apostatized is invited, for Christ is the sinner's High Priest.* "We have a High Priest." Who? "Jesus belongs to the sinner." He is given to save; then he belongs to the man who needs saving. Have we part in his sacrifice? is answered by another question—Do you need it? Let such draw near. 2. *He who has suffered in resisting apostasy is invited, for we may come "saying all."* "Let us draw near with boldness;" literally, "saying all." We cannot tell our fears, sufferings, temptations, victories, to any creature, and our hearts get full for want of one to understand our deepest experience. Then we may go to Christ, and at his feet make a clean breast of everything, "saying all." "Pour out your hearts before him," etc. Let such draw near. 3. *He who is tempted to apostasy is invited, for here "mercy and grace" are given.* Mercy and grace are free—free to the undeserving. Mercy for the past, grace for the future. Let those whose sin and infirmity and circumstances need these draw near, for such are welcome.—O. N.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Believers in Israel and in Christ.* I. THE RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN THE PROMISE AND PROSPECT OF ANCIENT ISRAEL AND BELIEVERS IN CHRIST. The Hebrew people had a promise which was given to Abraham as trustee for his descendants, which was that after many years of suffering in Egypt they should be released from slavery and oppression, and be led to the rest and enjoyment of Canaan. It was a promise which signifies the spontaneous declaration of the kindness and mercy of Jehovah, and flowed from his love toward Israel. It is a beam from the "Father of lights," who prevents us with the blessings of goodness, and meets us with the offers of grace and loving-kindness. This thought pervades the gospel, which is the free and unsolicited gift of God to the world; for there was no cry of spiritual distress and no agony of remorse which prompted men to desire salvation. The whole of the Christian system is suffused with the light and beauty of the "promises of him who cannot lie." This required on the part of Israel suitable and becoming exertion. They were to set forth from Egypt, and then listen to his Law at Sinai, and march under the Divine guidance, that God might bring upon them all that he had spoken. Similarly believers in our Lord are to "work out their salvation with fear and trembling," and are to leave the things that are behind and reach forth to those that are before. Israel had one thing to do; and those who believe in Christ are to seek the end of their faith in their admittance into the Father's house, where, instead of perishable tent and frequent change, there are many mansions of stability and eternal peace. It is a promise of rest. The Hebrews felt that in Egypt they did not belong to the nation in whose country they dwelt. They had no thought of permanence, no civil freedom, no security of person, and no fruit from their exacted labours. It may be believed that the promise and prospect of Canaan silently influenced their hearts and quickened desires for emancipation. The prospect of rest began to be very precious as suffering abounded; and at the appointed time they rose to commence the journey to the promised land. Those who believe in the Captain of

salvation have a Divine hope, and are taught to look for a Divine and eternal rest, which shall embrace more blessedness than we can at present imagine. It stands in happy contrast to the toil of daily life and the sight of imperfection in ourselves and others. It signifies rest from the stern duties of the mortification and crucifixion of the flesh. It is freedom from the changeableness of our present life, in which there is nothing stable in our emotions, our relationships, and the society of which we form a part. It is a blessed contrast to the mixed condition of the present state in which there are evil men and frequent doubts. Believers often look towards this divinely promised rest to encourage patience amidst the pressure of sickness and the force and frequency of temptation. It is, therefore, no wonder that Richard Baxter, who was burdened with frequent sickness, and tried by the controversies and troubles of his day, should find relief in writing his 'Saint's Rest,' which was at once the fruit of his painful experience and his spiritual desire for the rest of heaven.

II. THE CAUTION GIVEN TO CHRISTIANS LEST THEY RESEMBLE ANCIENT ISRAEL IN THEIR FAILURE TO GAIN THEIR REST. The prospect of Canaan was a gospel, or good tidings, to the Hebrews, since it assured them of a happy change in their condition. It brought before them the hope of freedom and the possession of a land which had a fertile soil and a genial climate. It promised them the blessing of the Divine protection, ordinances of worship, and life closed in peace and hope of the future. This was good tidings to them. Good tidings of great joy are made known to us. They were announced by our Lord, who came to seek and save that which was lost, and to offer the blessings of salvation from sin now, and the perfection of our nature in the life and immortality which he has brought to light. He offers us pardon, justification, and the indwelling of the Spirit, who becomes the earnest of the purchased possession. Many of the people who started from Egypt never reached Canaan; and Moses saw that many year after year died and were buried in the wilderness, and exclaimed, "We are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled." They failed in faith, and doubted the promises of the God of their fathers. Had they believed their faith would have been turned into sight, and their hope into happy fruition. The Word did not profit them, for they came short of the rest and blessedness of Canaan. The warning which was given to Jewish believers, and is conveyed through them to others of succeeding ages, reminds us of the vast and fatal effects of unbelief. The truth which they heard was not felt and held as a Divine utterance. It teaches us that the gospel should be so admitted to influence and govern us, that it should be a part of our nature, as food received and digested becomes a part of our living structure. It is faith which gives it a presence and power in the vital forces of our souls. It unites the truth to our spiritual nature with a close and blessed association; and verifies the word of St. James, who describes it as "the engrafted Word, which is able to save our souls." The importance of faith is to be seen in our Lord's constant requirement of its presence for the attainment of salvation. The apostles follow in his hallowed footsteps, and urge believers to cherish this Divine grace lest their career should end in disappointment and failure. To come short of Canaan was a calamity, because there was a loss of good, and life was closed under the gloomy sense of transgression; but to lose the glorious inheritance of eternal life is more affecting as the awful future outweighs the small and fading interests of the life that now is. The possibility of such a loss is sufficient to awaken fear.—B.

Vers. 8—10.—*The course of Christian effort is justified by the certainty of a future rest.* In these verses we have the gradual development of the idea of rest, which begins with the sabbath rest, in which God saw that all that he had made was very good, and he blessed the work of his hands. To keep this fact before the minds of Israel he ordained the celebration of the weekly sabbath, in which, as the Lord of time, he required his people to remit their daily labours, and acknowledge him as the Creator of heaven and earth. The next advance in the illustration of the idea of rest was the prospect of Canaan after the wandering for forty years in the wilderness. Many through unbelief fell short of its attainment. The next stage of progress in the unfolding of this thought is that in which the psalmist addresses the men of his day, who were taught to look forward to another and higher rest. This would have been unnecessary if the entrance into Canaan under the leadership of Joshua had exhausted

this Divine thought. There remains, after all these illustrations of the promise of rest, something yet to come. This is the method of Divine wisdom and mercy to go from one stage of revelation to a higher, until the types and facts of the past find their completeness and perfection in the blessings of the gospel. "Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual" (1 Cor. xv. 46). All Divine thoughts find their highest realization in our Lord, who said, "Behold, I make all things new." At first there was the tabernacle of the Divine presence, then the material temple built by Solomon, and then appears at last the spiritual and mystic temple against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. Amid all the changes of the present life this truth of the future rest shines with a steady and cheering ray. It is for the people of God, by which phrase we understand a brief description of such as have undergone a spiritual change which forbids them to seek repose in the world, and have found true peace in Jesus Christ. They have acquired a spiritual habit of faith and hope, and are looking for a "city that hath foundations, whose Maker and Builder is God." "We who believe," saith the writer, "are entering into rest, and moving towards its enjoyment, because it is an enterprise authorized by our Lord, gives dignity to our present life, and turns our brief earthly course into a preparation for eternal joy. They have ceased from their own works, which originally were dead, and consisted of outward ceremonies, and were wrought without that faith which alone makes them acceptable to God; for they that are in the flesh cannot please him. Being regenerated, their new works are prompted by the Divine Spirit, flow from love to Christ, and are filled with spiritual life; for 'if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, and all things are become new.'"—B.

VERS. 11—13.—Success. I. THE EXHORTATION TO EARNEST ENDEAVOUR TO AVOID FAILURE AND SECURE SUCCESS. The believers to whom these words were addressed were halting between two opinions. The question [was whether they should go back to the synagogue and the temple, and thus evade trial, or go forward in the brave and successful profession of Jesus Christ, and each should say, "Let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." No other subjects could approach these in importance, because they related to the life of the spirit, its power and safety now, and its eternal happiness in the life to come. The alternative is imaged by the fall and overthrow in the wilderness, and its lost labour, and the happy and successful entrance into the promised land. It was not a vain thing; it was for their life. The writer urges believers to labour, which term sets forth the arduousness of the enterprise and involves the exercise of watchfulness against the approach of foes, resolute self-repression, frequent prayer, and an ample and constant use of all divinely prescribed means for the preservation and furtherance of the spiritual life. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." With this view agrees the counsel of Paul, who reminds us of the strife of men in the arena for an earthly and fading crown, and hints at the severe training through which the runners pass, the rigour of their effort, which taxes all their strength of limb and speed of foot; and therefore believers should, in view of an immortal prize, labour to gain the approbation of the Judge, and realize the blessedness of Divine success.

II. THE SOLEMN FACT WITH WHICH THE EXHORTATION IS ENFORCED. This is the weighty and all-concerning truth, that the Word of God with which ancient Israel had to do is the Word which affects the life and career of all Christians. It is believed by able expounders of the Scriptures that as every word must have a speaker, it is reasonable to apply this passage to Jesus Christ, who is the Word, and out of whose mouth there goes the sharp two-edged sword (Rev. i. 16). It is quick, or living, because it is the abiding and unchangeable will of our Lord, and, when written, represents his mind concerning God, our sinfulness, our opportunity of salvation by believing in him, and our prospects of eternal life. Men die, and the prophets, apostles, and confessors are removed by death; but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever. It is active and powerful, and produces changes of view and life. It awakens prayer, and elicits cheerful and efficient service for Christ. The Word which dwells richly in believers awakens melody in the heart as unto the Lord. It is divinely penetrative, and enters into the secret places of the soul. There is an impressive example in 1 Cor. xiv. 24, where "one unlearned" enters the assembly and "he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and

thus the secrets of his heart being made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." This passage has an admonitory aspect, which is drawn from the history of Israel. The word of condemnation was spoken, and the unbelieving generation died in the wilderness, and funeral after funeral passed through the camp to the wilderness beyond; and Moses said, "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance" (Ps. xc. 8). It reminds of some truths regarding ourselves and our condition of exposure to the constant observation of Jesus Christ, with whom we have to do. It declares to thoughtful minds that while we are what we are only as we appear to him, and that we should be content with his perfect knowledge of us, there is to be a final and solemn appearance before him to whom we must give an account. Apostles, evangelists, pastors, and all Christians must appear before him, to present our life for his inspection and final decision. If we have sought first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; if we have been merciful to his poor and persecuted followers; if we have maintained our hold of the gospel amid changes of public opinion; if we have been faithful stewards of the manifold grace of God,—we shall give up our account with joy and not with grief.—B.

Vers. 14—16.—*Steadfastness.* I. THERE IS HERE ENCOURAGEMENT TO STEADFASTNESS FROM THE DIGNITY AND SPHERE OF OUR LORD'S MINISTRY. He is called the great High Priest, who stands in exalted contrast to Aaron and all his successors in the important duty of representing the people before God and representing God to the people. This greatness will appear in the arguments and discussions which follow, in which the holiness of his life, the value of his sacrifice, and the influence of his intercession will be explained and proved. He has passed into the heavens, and has left the material and earthly tabernacle behind him for the immediate and glorious presence of God, at whose right hand he sits and waits till all his enemies are made his footstool. If he persevered through trial and innumerable sorrows until he could cry, "It is finished," and reach the unrivalled exaltation of his heavenly priesthood, in the exercise of which he is not ashamed of his brethren, let us hold fast our profession of him in the world below. If the synagogue and Sanhedrim are against you, so might the thought be stated—Remember that the glory of your High Priest, and his love to you, claims and justifies your avowal of his cause and your attachment to his Name.

II. ENCOURAGEMENT FLOWS FROM THE SYMPATHY OF THE HIGH PRIEST. The inspired writer returns to the question which he had passingly noticed before, and alludes to the career of temptation through which the Redeemer fought his way to the glory which awaited him. He was tried by the loneliness of his spirit, for none could completely understand him. He was tempted by Pharisees and Sadducees. He was tempted by the ingratitude of men. He was specially tempted by Satan, who strove to turn him aside from his work, and stain the Lamb of God, who was to take away the sin of the world. Some of his temptations were beyond the reach of merely human experience, for his sorrows and burdens were such that it may be said, "of the people there was none with him;" "he trod the wine-press alone." He passed through all his trials without one act which was unworthy of his Divine character, and came out of the furnace of temptation without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. This qualifies him to sympathize with his afflicted followers. Angels and archangels can from their special experience offer no such help to struggling believers. Sympathy divides our sorrows and heightens our joys; and that which our Lord affords is quick in its movements and efficient in its influence. He showed this truth to Saul on the way to Damascus, and told him that in persecuting his disciples he was actually persecuting their glorified Master. If, therefore, the synagogue should despise and ill treat them, let them turn to him who in all their afflictions is afflicted, and whose grace can support them. Sympathy should inspire them with Divine confidence and hope.

"He knows what sore temptations mean,
For he has felt the same."

III. ENCOURAGEMENT FROM FREE ACCESS TO THE THRONE OF GRACE. There is a precious compass and variety of thought in this appeal to Christian experience. There is the throne, which is the image of power, where Jehovah sits in glory, and all

angels, all creation, all providence with its wide range and marvellous machinery, all the agencies of the Church and the gift of the Divine Spirit, are under his guidance. It is the throne of grace, and stands in contrast to the awfulness of Sinai, and the solitary chamber of the holy of holies, into which the high priest entered once a year. The throne is radiant with the Divine light, and love; for "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all," and "God is love," and is exalted that he may be gracious unto us. The writer invites believers to come with boldness, and probably suggests a contrast to the ancient service of the high priest on the Day of Atonement, and the spirit of bondage in which many of the Jewish people were held. The Christian state is one of liberty and filial love. God sends forth "the Spirit of his Son, crying, Abba, Father." Since Christ is our High Priest, and the throne is one of grace, we may have access by one Spirit unto the Father, and speak to him with the reverential confidence which he invites and will justify by affording spiritual help. This help we need in the form of mercy to pardon the faults and mistakes of our life, and to regain the waste of spiritual strength in the warfare and collisions of life. He will give grace in cheering proofs of his favour, and in maintaining our fidelity to his cause amid the strain of temptation and the examples of failure in those who once ran well and have been hindered. "He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will be withhold from them that walk uprightly."—B.

Ver. 1.—*The two gospels.* I. THE FIRST GOSPEL. That which was proclaimed to Abraham, repeated, enforced to his posterity, standing before them in the way of duty and of hope, even in the darkest days of Egyptian bondage. It was a gospel that proclaimed rest, settlement, worship, and service in the land of Canaan. And though special attention is called here to the great Abrahamic and Mosaic promise to Israel, yet be it also noted that God is ever a Being sending forth gospels when there is need of them and ground to show that there will be anything substantial in them. Never did an *εγγελες* go forth without an *εβγγελιον* of some sort. It is we that turn gospels into the worst of news, because in benefiting others they may make it needful for us to suffer. And yet what seems bad news on the first look of it may turn out in the end to have been the best of news. The good news which Moses brought to Israel of the impending deliverance from servitude may fairly be called, in common parlance, bad news for Pharaoh and the Egyptians, seeing it meant national humiliation, the loss of so much useful labour. Yet who can doubt that even for Egypt, after all the calamities of the plagues, there was a great good in that which brought good to Israel? A gospel prominently set forth for some is really a gospel for all.

II. THE SECOND GOSPEL. A second, and yet in truth it was nothing but the fulness of the first. Liberty for the enslaved, rest for the weary, a secure and fruitful inheritance for the true children of Abraham, those of like faith with him,—these are the promises of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And so this gospel, an everlasting gospel, remains uttered forth, wherever the need of man presses. This is one of the great uses of preaching, that by it gospel promises, possibilities, and invitations are for ever sounding forth in the ears of men. The complaint is that preachers are ever saying the same old thing; yet that is to a certain extent their virtue and their value. The ear that heard yesterday belonged to a man who rather preferred to hear the gospel coming from worldly wisdom; but to-day he has found that gospel to be no gospel, and the true heavenly message not heard at all, or only half heard, is received in all its pertinency, its sweetness, its fulness. The throng of men abounds every day in what conventionally is called bad news, news of money losses, shattered health, ruined reputation, relatives and friends passed away. Over against these how supremely important to feel that there is always good news in this, that "God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life"!—Y.

Ver. 2.—*The gospel profitless to an unbelieving heart.* With the Israelites their sin was not so much actual and active unbelief, a bold denial of Jehovah's truth, as the lack of an actual and active faith. There was no active spiritual energy in them to meet the abundant energy of their liberating and guiding God. The parable of the seed in the four kinds of ground may well be applied to them. The great bulk of them gave not the slightest real attention to any Divine word of promise or duty. Some

doubtless did mean to be docile, obedient, and patient; and a few at least must have been in real accord with Jehovah's aim. But what availed a few, if the bulk of the people sat before Jehovah in carnal indifference? If we would profit by the greater gospel to us—

I. WE MUST BELIEVE IT TO BE TRUE. This very thing we think we do, and yet on inquiry we find we do it not. There is no mistake when a man feels he is dealing with realities. And the way in which we not seldom talk of the gospel or behave when it is set before us shows that to us it is no reality. And yet, just because it is a reality, we shall have to deal with it some day. True strength, peace, and blessedness lie in reconciliation with God. To believe the gospel as true is to come to know this in time. But sooner or later we shall have to know that strength, peace, and blessedness lie nowhere else.

II. WE MUST BELIEVE THE WORK TO BE NEEDFUL. The gospel includes purification, trial, discipline, service. The gospel does not always look like a gospel. For instance, Jesus says, "It is expedient for you that I go away." The gospel has allowed its heralds and its recipients to be put in prison and to go to death. Trust is needed in the reality of love behind the appearance of indifference; the heart of the believer feeling God to be near when to the worldly spectators it may seem that nothing is near but trouble, pain, loss, confusion. We have to trust God as to his way, his time, or the gospel will be profitless to us.

III. WE MUST GET OUT OF OUR HEARTS A PREFERENCE FOR BELIEVING THE FALSE. As our eyes look out upon the world with its opportunities and its varied scenes, its paths for ambition and adventure, we make gospels for ourselves out of the things we see. Nature seems full of evangelists, and we believe everything they have to say; and then at last discover the gospel to be one of our own making. For the time the false is more attractive than the true, and we mix strong faith with our hearing of it. But as a true gospel is profitless without faith, so a false gospel is profitless, however strong the faith may be. God's truth cannot do without our faith, nor our faith without God's truth.—Y.

Ver. 9.—*The true sabbatic rest.* Note here the word employed—*σαββατισμὸς*. This is the only occurrence of the word. It is preceded and followed by another word for rest—*κατάπαυσις*. There must be something in the abrupt utterance for just once of this word in ver. 9. The different word must emphasize difference of meaning. The difference seems to lie here, that there are two kinds of rest to be thought of—one the rest from toil and exertion, the rest to the weary; the other rest of cessation from work, because something is complete. Thus we have two views of the Christian's future.

I. HE IS TO HAVE REST FROM ALL THAT MAKES LIFE WEARY. The *σαββατισμὸς* must include the *κατάπαυσις*: but, then, there may also be the *κατάπαυσις* every day and all day long. To rest the body after toil is very important, but more important is it to be able to rest the heart. There are only too many who get no proper rest of body on Sunday because their hearts are full of unrest. It is more than can be expected from imperfect humanity that we should attain this constant restfulness of spirit; but let it be understood that the cause lies in our imperfections, and not in any absolute necessity of the case. Rest is begun in a trustful heart, and the more trust the more rest. Much of the weariness of life comes from our own needless, useless struggling. We make toilsome work by our ambitions and our fears. People prefer the toiling and the care of the life of sight to the rest of the life of trust. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul."

II. HE IS TO HAVE REST AFTER COMPLETED WORK. This is the true *σαββατισμὸς*. Why is the other kind of rest, the rest from toil, necessary? Because man is fallen. He works not according to the pure, original power of his creation, but under constraint; duty and inclination too often opposed; or, if not in opposition, there is immense friction between them. But if there had been no fall, the work of each individual man would have gone on calmly, equably, till it was done. Then the *σαββατισμὸς* would come. Look at man on parallel lines from God. God works out the great scheme and order of creation, and then ceases creating; but he is not weary when the work is done. God makes men in his own image; and the universal human race has its work to do, with each individual working in his proper place. Then, when the work is done, comes the sabbatism. Let this nobler view of rest be ours. In the heat of noonday it is per-

mitted that we look to the sunset and think of rest from *toil*. But let us also take pride in the *work* we have to do, thinking that some day, by the Spirit of God working in us, the workmanship will be complete. God will have his particular sabbatism in us; and we, complete in Christ, shall get our sabbatism with God.—Y.

Ver. 12.—*Characteristics of the Word of God.* What is the connection with the context? Is it not this, that the Word of God, living and abiding for ever (1 Pet. i. 23), stands in its constant living relation to every generation of men? So far as we are essentially in the position of that generation which came out of Egypt, so far as we have Divine promises before us the conditions of which we may neglect, so far are we the objects of the same Word of God. Essentially the same Divine visitation, judicial visitation, comes on all who fail to show that trust which is their duty. The same things must happen to all who will not believe what is true and trust what is trustworthy. And yet what is here said of the Word of God only takes a threatening aspect if we choose to have it so. The Word of God has a double function. It may penetrate, physician-like, to heal, to purify, to illuminate the depths and darknesses of our being, or it may penetrate to furnish the irresistible evidence for our condemnation. It is sufficient, then, that we look at the characteristics of God's Word in themselves. What they may become in action it is for us to decide.

I. THE WORD OF GOD IS LIVING. Every word concerning truth and duty, every word of promise, comfort, revelation of the unseen, is like a living being sent out into the world, going to and fro in the earth, so that none of us knows when, with all its fulness of life, it may take hold of us. "Moses," says Stephen in his great discourse, "received the lively oracles (*λογια ζῶντα*) to give to us." It is well that we should bear in mind how the written Scriptures, though an invaluable help, are not an absolute necessity. Apart from the living Spirit of God which fills them with life, they would be, perhaps, the least comprehensible, the most perplexing, of antique writings. Nor must we be forgetful of that Divine Logos spoken of at the beginning of John's Gospel. In that Logos was life—life which was the light of men. The Word of God finding its highest expression, the expression of what would otherwise be ineffable in a manifested human life; human, yet Divine; Divine, yet human.

II. THE WORD OF GOD IS POWERFUL. Powerful, but powerful in a peculiar way. Energetic, shall we say? Leaven—leavening the whole lump, undermining cherished principles of worldly wisdom, falsehoods, prejudices, superstitions, and putting in their place the Christian—the true and the rational. Note the expression of Paul in 2 Cor. iv. 12, where he speaks of life energizing in us.

III. THE WORD OF GOD IS PENETRATING. This would seem to be the characteristic most to be borne in mind, considering how language is multiplied and varied to declare it. The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. Some plain word of God with the Spirit's force behind it is a sword, sharper than any two-edged sword; and yet, unlike the carnal weapon, it is not for killing, nor for mischief. Here is the penetrating power which reveals all secrets, opens out all mysteries. It hacks its way in and in till it is face to face with the real man. Every man has, as it were, a holy of holies with respect to others. They cannot get behind the veil. But God is never anywhere else in relation to us. His ways are past finding out by us. But all our ways in every winding are known to him. And all this deep, infallible searching is for our good.—Y.

Ver. 14.—*Our great High Priest passed into the heavens.* I. THE COMPARISON IMPLIED. Ch. ix. helps us here. There the writer speaks of two tabernacles—the first outside the veil, the second within. Into the second the high priest went alone once a year. There, away from the sight of the people, before the ark of the covenant containing the tables of our Law, he transacted solemn business with God on behalf of his fellow-Israelites. And not only so, this high priest was acknowledged by the whole people. They believed, or professed to believe, that he was a necessary medium of communication between God and them. And so he was for the time, and long continued so. The bulk of the Hebrew people at the time this Epistle was written had a profound regard, though also a superstitious and servile one, for the person of the high priest. There might be in the regard very little of intelligence, and very doubtful advantage; but still,

there it was, a real acknowledgment, quite enough out of which to make a striking illustration of him who is the real great High Priest—Jesus, the Son of God. He also has passed through and gone behind a veil, the veil that separates the seen from the unseen. What a thought of the unseen, that it is God's true holy of holies! Doubtless there is a special reference here to the day of ascension, when Jesus rose from the midst of his disciples, and a cloud received him out of their sight.

II. HOW WE ARE TO PROFIT BY THIS COMPARISON. The comparison—the parallel—was easy enough to these Hebrew Christians. It referred them to traditions and a ritual with which they were familiar from childhood. They saw high priests continually. But we know nothing of a priest, an altar, a sacrifice. We do not hear the lowing of oxen and the bleating of sheep whose lives are to be taken away in the acceptable worship of God. We could not bring ourselves to think that such things could be of any use. Not at all doubting that they once served a purpose, we know that the purpose exists no longer. Believing that they were once somehow necessary, that is all we can say. Our experience gives us nothing whereby we may understand the necessity. Thus the question comes—How are we, who have never had anything to do with such a priest as Aaron, or any of his posterity, to get good out of this exhortation? What sort of notion are we to represent to our minds when we are told to hold fast our profession in a great High Priest passed into the heavens, when, as a matter of experience, we have never had anything to do with priests at all? It would be a great mistake to say that we are to trouble ourselves no more about the priestly idea. Though we cannot make the forms of the old Jewish priesthood a living thing to us, still we can surely do something to get at the idea which lies behind all priesthood. We are often misled by *confounding priesthood with priestcraft*. The indignation of every honest heart cannot be too strong against the abomination, priestcraft. But why an abomination? Just because it is the degradation of a good thing. Priesthood is simply the office and function of the man who is set apart to act on behalf of his fellow-men in their relations to God. And looking at what is to be found in the Old Testament with respect to the priestly office, we find there was no chance for priestcraft. The true priest had to be an honest, patient man, faithful in little things, exact in minute observances, full of self-denial, and constantly attentive to the requests of all the people. The very Scriptures which exalt priesthood denounce priestcraft. Priesthood is the means whereby men are governed and blessed spiritually; priestcraft the means whereby they are spiritually crushed, and their consciences made slaves to another man's will. Priestcraft is only to be got rid of by giving the true priesthood its full force. Allowing ourselves to drift into the idea that priesthood is obsolete, we shall never get rid of priestcraft; since error only dies out as truth is planted by its side, drawing away from the roots of error all that nourished them. The priesthood in ancient Israel, with all its mere outward rites, with all its defects and lapses, did a great service. It prepared the way for the great High Priest of our acknowledgment. And, after all, priesthood is only the *name*; it is the *thing* we have to look at. Jesus is he who answers the questions no one on earth can answer; renders the services no one on earth can render; we therefore call him great High Priest. Pretenders may come in, and by their doings make the name of priest hateful; but the work of the true Priest is none the less real. And the exhortation is that we should avail ourselves of that work to the very fullest extent. Then all the good things coming to us by nature will be crowned by this best thing coming through grace. Men have helped us according to their opportunity—loving, self-denying parents, skilful instructors, watchful and wise-hearted friends, great men who have revealed themselves in books, making us feel what a noble thing it is to be partakers of human nature; and then Jesus of Nazareth comes in at last, Priest of the most high God, abiding for ever, and undertaking to satisfy our deepest wants out of the immeasurable fulness of God.—Y.

Vers. 15, 16.—*The helpful nearness to man of the true High Priest.* I. THE DIFFERENCE WITH REGARD TO OTHER PRIESTS. Other priests are lacking in proper sympathy with human weakness. They are lacking in a sense of the almost omnipotence of tempting influence. They themselves, in all important respects, are no better than those for whom they act. Not that they are to blame for this; other things were not expected from them. They were only to be part of an instructive and impressive

ceremonial by which might be set forth, by the best means attainable at the time, something as to what a priest, an offering and an approach to God, ought to be. The very defects of the priest taken from among men emphasize the need of something immeasurably better. Sinful men should be able to sympathize with sinful men; but, as a matter of fact, they very frequently are unable to do this even in the most qualified way. They can sympathize in a measure with sickness, with temporal calamity; but too often for sin, for crime, for vice, they have nothing but denunciation with respect to men. There is a hint to us how we should recollect that the greater sinner a man is, the greater is his need for human sympathy.

II. THE PERFECTION OF PRIESTLY QUALITIES FOUND IN CHRIST. In him there is all the true priest needs. He is attracted, not by the strong side of human nature, but by the weak. Easy is it to be drawn to men in the hours of their full life, in their prime, when they are strong for action either of body or of mind; and it is pleasant to look at the results of all their effort. But it is much better, difficult though it be, to look at man in his hours of weakness and need; for it is out of the midst of his weakness that his highest strength is to be attained. And so Jesus was drawn to men in their weakness. He came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to minister to those who really needed ministry. We do not serve rightly when we serve those who are quite able to do things for themselves. This is only to increase the indolence of the world. Christ comes to give the help that but for his coming could not be given. He sympathizes with us in all weakness, in poverty, in sickness, in feebleness of body and harassing circumstances. But his sympathy is specially with us in temptation. He was tempted in all points like as we are, *i.e.* his temptation was a real thing; and the temptation he had to suffer was one suited to the peculiarities of his position and his work. We are to think here, not so much of his experiences in the wilderness, as of Gethsemane (ch. v. 7). The temptations of the wilderness he saw through at once; they must have been very clumsy artifices in his eye. But Gethsemane tried him. The pure gold went into the furnace there that its purity might be made manifest. And thus it was shown that he was without a sin. The more we are made to feel our own sin, the more our hearts are revealed, the closer we are drawn to him who has no sin, and who shows us that sin is no essential part of human nature.

III. THE PRACTICAL RESULT OF THESE CONSIDERATIONS. We are to make full use of the Priest thus provided—a Priest not of our finding or our making. He has not come by some process of selection and training employed by men, but is of Divine appointment; an Apostle from the throne of grace, beseeching us to accept him as the sufficient Interpreter of human needs and human penitence. Our attitude is to be one of approach to the throne of grace, thinking of it as such; thinking of the severities of God and the penal aspects of law as only grace in disguise. Chastisement, punishment, pain, are but grace not understood. We must have boldness, freeness, a strong sense of the right given us to approach the throne of grace. We must have a sense of how God will treat us. He will not only put us into a better state, but do it in a most compassionate and tender way. It is conceivable that a physician might perfectly cure a sick person, yet do it all like a machine, without any manifestation of heart, without a single kind or cheering word.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER V.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.

The purpose of the first part of this chapter (vers. 1—10) is to corroborate the position arrived at in the conclusion of ch. iv., *viz.* that we have in Christ a true High Priest sufficient for all our needs. This is done by analyzing the conception of a high priest, and observing that Christ in

all respects fulfils it. And thus the full exposition of Christ's heavenly priesthood above that of Aaron is prepared for. But this full exposition is still not entered on till after an exhortation (beginning at ch. v. 11), longer and more earnest than any former one, called for by the slowness of the Hebrew Christians to apprehend the doctrine. It is at length taken up and carried out in ch. vii.

The intention of vers. 1—10 being as above explained, it is a mistake to suppose any contrast intended here between the Aaronic priesthood and that of Christ; e.g. to take vers. 1—3 as meaning, *Human* high priests can sympathize in virtue of their own infirmity,—*otherwise* Christ; or, *Human* high priests have need of atonement for themselves,—*not so* Christ. The main drift, on the contrary, is that all recognized essentials of high priesthood are found in Christ. These essentials are that, the high priest's office being to mediate between man and God, (1) he should be of the same nature, and sympathetic with those in whose behalf he mediates; and (2) that his credentials should be Divine, i.e. that God himself should have appointed him to his office.

Ver. 1.—For every high priest, from among men being taken, for men is constituted in the things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. Here *ἐξ ἀνθρώπων λαμβανόμενος* is not (as the rendering of the A.V. might suggest) a limitation of the subject of the sentence, confining it to *merely human* high priests; it belongs to the predicate, expressing what is true of every high priest. The phrase expresses both the necessary *humanity* of the high priest, and also his being set apart for his peculiar office—*λαμβάνόμενος ἐξ*. The order, and consequent force, of the words in the Greek is retained in the translation given above. (For the expression, *ἐκ τῶν θείων*, cf. ch. ii. 17; Rom. xv. 17.) The purpose for which the high priest is constituted in this relation is "that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins"—a comprehensive designation of sacerdotal functions, the essential idea, expressed by *ἐπὶ ἁμαρτιῶν*, being *atonement* (cf. ch. ii. 17, *Εἰς τὸ ἰλῆκεσθαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ λαοῦ*). The difference between the words *δῶρον* and *θυσία* is that the former, denoting properly any offering regarded as a gift, is especially applied in the LXX. to the *minchah* ("meat offering"); the latter (from *θύω*) denotes properly "a bloody sacrifice," and is generally so applied. The distinction, however, is not invariably observed, *δῶρον* being used in this Epistle (ch. xi. 4) for Abel's sacrifice and (ch. viii. 4) for all kinds of offerings, while *θυσία* in the LXX. denotes (Gen. iv. 3) Cain's unbloody offering and (Lev. ii. 1) the *minchah*. But here, as also in ch. viii. 8 and ix. 9, where both are named (*δῶρα τε καὶ θυσίας*), we may conclude a distinctive reference to be intended to the unbloody

and bloody offerings of the Law (cf. Pa. xl. 6, "Sacrifice and offering (*θυσίας καὶ προσφορὰν*, LXX.) thou didst not desire;" Dan. ix. 27, *θυσία καὶ σπονδή*; and also Jer. xvii. 26. To both *ἐπὶ ἁμαρτιῶν* (depending, not on *θυσίας*, but on *προσφοράν*) applies. For, though bloodshedding (ch. ix. 22) was essential for atonement, the unbloody *minchah* formed part of the ceremony of expiation, and this notably on the Day of Atonement, so specially referred to afterwards in the Epistle (see Numb. xxix. 7—11).

Ver. 2.—Who can have compassion on the ignorant and erring; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. It is not easy to find a satisfactory English equivalent for *μετριοπαθεῖν*, translated as above in the A.V.; by Alford, "be compassionate towards;" in the margin of the A.V., "reasonably bear with;" by the recent Revisers, "bear gently with;" by Bengel, "moderate afflicti." The compound had its origin, doubtless, in the peripatetic school, denoting the right mean between passionateness and Stoic *apathy*, being the application of Aristotle's *μεσότης* to the sphere of the passions. Thus Diog. Laert. says of Aristotle, *Ἐφη δὲ τὸν σοφὸν μὴ εἶναι μὲν ἀπαθῆ, μετριοπαθῆ δὲ*. In this sense Philo uses *μετριοπαθῆς* to express Abraham's sober grief after the death of Sarah (ii. 37) and Jacob's patience under his afflictions (ii. 45). The verb, followed, as here, by a dative of persons, may be taken, therefore, to denote moderation of feeling towards the persons indicated, such moderation being especially opposed in the case before us, where the persons are the ignorant and erring, to excess of severe or indignant feeling. Moderation, indeed, in this regard seems to have been the idea generally attached to the compound (cf. Plut., 'De Ira Cohib.,' p. 453, *Ἀναστῆσαι καὶ σώσαι καὶ φειδίσθαι καὶ κατερῆσαι πρᾶξις ἐστὶ καὶ συγγνώμη καὶ μετριοπαθείας*). Josephus also speaks of the emperors Vespasian and Titus as *μετριοπαθεσάντων* in their attitude towards the Jews after long hostility ('Ant.,' xii. 8 2). This, then, being the meaning of *μετριοπαθεῖν*, it is obvious how the capacity of it is essential to the idea of a high priest as being one who is resorted to as a mediator by a people laden with infirmities, to represent them and to plead for them. It is not of necessity implied that every high priest was personally *μετριοπαθῆς*: it is the ideal of his office that is spoken of. And, in the case of human high priests, this ideal was fulfilled by their being themselves human, encompassed themselves with the infirmity of those for whom they mediated. Christ also, so far, evidently fulfils the condition. For, though he is afterwards distinguished (ch. vii. 26)

from priests having themselves infirmity, yet he had, in his human nature, experienced what it was: "He was crucified *ἐξ ἀσθενίας*" (2 Cor. xiii. 4); "Himself took our infirmities (*ἀσθενίας*), and bare our sicknesses" (Matt. viii. 17; Isa. liii. 4); the agony in the garden (whatever its mysterious import, of which more below) expressed personal experience of human *ἀσθενία*. Alford denies that *ἀσθενία*, in the sense supposed by him to be here intended, can be attributed to Christ, and hence that *ἀντιπροσέποιον ἀσθενείας* can apply to him (but see above on ch. iv. 15, and below on vers. 3, 7).

Ver. 3.—And by reason hereof he ought (or, *is bound*, *δεδειχται*), as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. This obligation is evident in the case of the high priests of the Law. Consequently, their sin offering for themselves, in the first place, was a prominent part of the ceremonial of the Day of Atonement, which the writer may be supposed to have especially in view (Lev. xvi.). But can we suppose any corresponding necessity in the case of Christ? The argument does not absolutely require that we should, since the obligation of the Levitical high priest may be adduced only in proof of his own experience of *ἀσθενία*. Christ, though under no such obligation, might still fulfil the requisites of a high priest, expressed in the case of sinful high priests by the obligation to offer for themselves; and we may (as Ebrard says) leave it to the writer to show how he does fulfil them. Whether, however, there was in Christ's own experience anything corresponding to the high priest's offering for himself will be considered under vers. 7, 8.

Ver. 4.—And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but being called of God (the *ὁ* of Textus Receptus before *καλούμενος*—"he that is called," as in A.V.—has very slight authority), even as was Aaron. This verse expresses the second essential of a high priest, Divine appointment, for assurance of the efficacy of his mediation. Of course Aaron's successors derived their Divine commission from his original one (cf. Numb. xxi. 26; xxvi. 10—14).

Vers. 5, 6.—So also Christ glorified not himself to be made a High Priest. Here begins the proof that Christ fulfils the two requirements, that mentioned second in the previous statement being taken first in the proof—*christically*, as is usual in this Epistle. The expression, *ταυτὸν ἐδέξατο*, rather than *τὴν τιμὴν ἔλαβεν*, may have reference to the glory wherewith Christ is crowned in his exalted position as Priest-King (cf. ch. ii. 9). But he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. These two texts

(Ps. ii. 7; ex. 4) must be taken together for the proof required. The first (commented on under ch. i. 5) shows the Lord's appointment of Christ to his kingly office as Son; the second shows that this kingly office carries with it, also by Divine appointment, an eternal priesthood. Christ's entry into this kingly priesthood is best conceived as inaugurated by his resurrection, after accomplishment of human obedience, whereby he fitted himself for priesthood. Before this he was the destined High Priest, but not the "perfected" High Priest, "ever living to make intercession for us." It is not during his life on earth, but after his exaltation, that he is spoken of as the High Priest of mankind. In his sufferings and death he was consecrated to his eternal office. This appears from vers. 9, 10, and also from Ps. cx., quoted in this verse, where the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek and the exaltation to the right hand of God are regarded together. See also what was said under ch. i. 5, of the application to Christ of the other text quoted, "This day have I begotten thee." The Messianic reference and general drift of Ps. cx. has been considered under ch. i. 13. It was there seen to be more than a *typical* prophecy, David having in it a distinct view of One far greater than himself—of the Son to come, whom he calls his Lord. But even had it, like other Messianic psalms, a primary reference to some theocratic king, the remarkable import of ver. 4 would in itself point beyond one. For, though David organized and controlled the priesthood and the services of the sanctuary, though both he and Solomon took a prominent part in solemn acts of worship, yet neither they nor any other king assumed the priestly office, which, in its essential functions, was scrupulously confined to the sons of Aaron. The judgment on Uzziah (2 Chron. xxvi. 16—22) is a notable evidence of the importance attached to this principle. Yet the verse before us assigns a true priesthood to the future King. For Melchizedek, as he appears in Genesis, is evidently a true priest, though prior to the Aaronic priesthood, uniting in himself, according to the system of the patriarchal age, the royalty and the priesthood of his race: as a true priest, he blessed Abraham, and received tithes from him. But of him, historically and symbolically regarded, the consideration must be reserved for ch. vii., where the subject is taken up. Enough here to observe that in Ps. cx. a true and everlasting priesthood is assigned to the Son in union with his exalted royalty at the Lord's right hand, and this by Divine appointment, by the "voice" or "oracle" of the Lord (ver. 1), confirmed by the Lord's oath (ver. 4).

Vers. 7, 8.—Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up (rather, *when he offered up*) prayers and supplications to him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered. Here (according to the view taken above of the *chiastic* structure of the passage) we have the account of how Christ fulfilled the human requirements of a High Priest, referred to in vers. 2, 3. This main intention of vers. 7, 8 must be kept in mind for a proper understanding of them. Christ is in them regarded, not as executing his priestly office, but as being prepared and consecrated for it. His eternal priesthood is conceived as entered on *after* the human experience which is the subject of these verses (cf. *καὶ τελευτήσας ὑψέρω* (ver. 9), and what was said under ver. 5). With regard to the participial *σολιστάς, προσερχόμενος, εὐχαριστοῦν*, it is a misapprehension of their proper force to regard them as denoting a time *previous* to that of *ἐμάνειν* in ver. 8; as if the meaning were—having in Gethsemane “offered,” etc., and “been heard,” he *afterwards* “learned obedience” on the cross. All they express is that in offering, etc., and being heard, he learned obedience. The idea of subsequent time does not come in till ver. 9; “and being perfected,” after thus learning obedience, “he became,” etc. Thus the only question with regard to *time* in vers. 7, 8 is whether they have reference to the agony in the garden only, or both to the agony and the cross. That they refer mainly, if not exclusively, to the agony is evident from the expressions used, corresponding so closely with the Gospel history. The view presented is, as in the Gospels, of some intense inward struggle, outwardly manifested, and expressing itself in repeated prayers (observe the plural, *δεήσεις καὶ λυγνίαι*) aloud for deliverance. It is true that the Gospels, as we have them now, do not mention *tears*; but these too are quite in keeping with the bloody sweat specified by St. Luke, and Epiphanius states that the original copies of Luke xxii. 43, 44 contained the verb *ἐλάσσε*. Some interpreters would identify the *κραυγὴ ἰσχυρὰ* of ver. 7 with the “loud voice (*φωνὴ μεγάλη*)” from the cross (Matt. xxvii. 46; Mark xv. 34; Luke xxiii. 46). But there is nothing to suggest this; the “strong crying and tears” evidently denote the manner of the “prayers and supplications;” and the thrice-repeated prayer in the garden recorded by the evangelists may be well conceived to have been thus loudly uttered, so as to be heard by the three disciples, a stone’s cast distant, before sleep overcame them. “In cruce clamasse dicitur; lachrymasse non dicitur. Utrum horum res-

plicit locum Gethsemane” (Bengel). What, then, as seen in the light of these verses, was the meaning of the “prayer and supplications” in the garden of Gethsemane? The expression, *τὸν θυμὸν ὁσέως αὐτὸν ἐκ θαλάττης*, corresponding with *πάντα θυμῷ σοῦ* of Mark xiv. 36, confirms the view that the “cup” which he prayed might pass from him, was the death before him, and that the purport of his prayer was, not to be raised from death after undergoing it, but to be saved from undergoing it. Such is the ordinary meaning of *ὁσέως ἐκ θαλάττης* in reference to one still alive (cf. Ps. xxxiii. 19; Jas. v. 20). It does not indeed positively follow that, because he prayed to One who was able in this sense to save him, his prayer was that he might be in this sense saved. It is, however, the natural inference. But, if so, two difficulties present themselves. (1) How was such a prayer consistent with his distinct knowledge that death must be undergone, and his late strong rebuke to Peter for venturing to dissuade him from it? (2) How can he be said to have been *heard* (*εὐχαριστοῦν*), since he was not saved from death in the sense intended? To the first of these questions the answer is that the prayer expressed, not the deliberate desire of his Divine will, but only the inevitable shrinking of the human will from such an ordeal as was before him. As man, he experienced this shrinking to the full, and as man he craved deliverance, though with entire submission to the will of the Father. His human will did not oppose itself to the Divine will: it conformed itself in the end entirely to it; but this according to the necessary conditions of humanity, through the power of prayer. Had it not been so with him, his participation in human nature would have been incomplete; he would not have been such as to be “touched with a feeling of our infirmities, being in all things tempted like as we are;” nor would he have stood forth for ever as the great Example to mankind. St. John, who so deeply enters into and interprets the mind of Christ, records an utterance before the agony which anticipates its meaning (John xii): “The hour is come” (ver. 23); and then (ver. 27), “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour [cf. *ὁσέως ἐκ θαλάττης*]; but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy Name.” The “hour” was that of the drinking of the cup (cf. Mark xiv. 35, “And prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him”). “Father, save me from this hour” was the human craving of the agony; but still, “Father, glorify thy Name” was the essence of the prayer; and perfect submission to the Divine will was the outcome

of it, after this *troubling* of his human soul. The mystery surrounding the whole subject of the Divine and human in Christ remains still. What was said with regard to it about the temptation in the wilderness (ch. iv. 15) is applicable also here. If it be further asked how it was that Christ, in his humanity, so shrank from the "cup" before him, seeing that mere men have been found to face death calmly in its most appalling forms, the answer may be found in the consideration of what this cup implied. It was more than physical death, more than physical pain, more than any sorrow that falls to the lot of man. Such expressions as "ἤρξατο λυγέσθαι καὶ ἀδημονεῖν . . . περίλυτος ἐστὶν ἡ ψυχὴ μου ὡς θανάτου (Matt. xxvi. 37, 38); "ἤρξατο ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι καὶ ἀδημονεῖν (Mark xiv. 33); Γενόμενος ἐν ἀγωνίᾳ ἐκτενεστέρον προσήχετο (Luke xxii. 44); the bloody sweat, and the cry of "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—convey in themselves the impression of a mysterious ordeal, beyond what we can fathom, undergone by the atoning Saviour in that "hour" of the "power of darkness." Of the *second* difficulty mentioned above, as to how Christ was "heard," not having been saved "from death" in the apparent sense of his prayer, the solution may be that the prayer, conditioned as it was by *ei θανάτου*, was most truly answered by the angel sent to strengthen him, and the power thenceforth given him to "endure the cross, despising the shame." "Mortem ex qua Pater eum liberare posset, ne moreretur, tamen subit, voluntati Patris obediens: ab horrore plane liberatus est per exauditionem. . . . Exauditus est, non ut ne biberet calicem, sed ut jam sine ullo horrore biberet: unde etiam per angelum corroboratus est" (Bengel). The example to us thus becomes the more apparent. For we, too, praying legitimately for release from excessive trial, may have our prayer best answered by grace given to endure the trial, and by "a happy issue" out of it; as was the case with Christ. For his bitter passion was made the path to eternal glory; and thus in the Resurrection too his prayer was answered. The exact meaning of *εἰσακουσθεὶς ἀπὸ τῆς εὐλαβείας* is not easy to determine. It is taken by a large proportion of commentators to mean "deliverance from his fear;" *εἰσακουσθεὶς* ἀπὸ being supposed to be a *constructio prægna* in the sense of "heard so as to be delivered," and *εὐλαβεία* to denote the dread experienced in Gethsemane. So the old Italian Versions, and Ambrose, "exauditus a metu;" so Bengel, "ab horrore liberatus per exauditionem." This interpretation is upheld by Beza, Grotius, Tholuck, Hofmann, Ebrard, and many others; some of whom, less tenably (as

Calvin, Hammond, Jackson), understand *εὐλαβεία* as meaning, not the fear felt, but the thing feared: "ab eo quod timebat" (Calvin). The objections to this view are (1) the doubtfulness of the *constructio prægna* (the instances adduced—*ἐπήκουσέ μου εἰς πλάτυσμόν*, Ps. cxviii. 5; *ἐρρήντισμένοι . . . ἀπὸ συνειδήσεως ποιητῆς*, ch. x. 22—are not parallel); and (2) the sense assigned to *εὐλαβεία*, since *εὐλαβεῖσθαι* and its derivatives, when used to express fear, denote usually, not a shrinking, but a wary or cautious fear, and commonly carry with them (in this Epistle and St. Luke especially) the idea of piety. Thus in ch. xi. 7, of Noah, *εὐλαβηθεὶς κατεσκεύασε κιβωτὸν*: ch. xii. 28, *μετ' αἰδοῦς καὶ εὐλαβεαί*; and in Luke ii. 25; Acts ii. 5; viii. 2; xii. 12, *εὐλαβής* is synonymous with *εὐσεβής*. The rendering hence preferred by many, having the authority of Chrysostom, and among moderns of Lünemann, Bleek, Delitzsch, Alford, and others, is that of the Vulgate, "exauditus pro sua reverentia." So Vigilius, "propter timorem;" the A.V., "heard in that he feared," or, as in the margin, "heard for his piety;" and in the recent revision, "for his godly fear;" which is the A.V.'s rendering of *εὐλαβεία* in ch. xii. 28. The objection to the use of ἀπὸ to express the cause of his being heard is met by reference to the frequent usage of St. Luke, whose language most resembles that of our Epistle. Thus: ἀπὸ τοῦ δόχλου (Luke xix. 3); ἀπὸ τῆς χάριτος (Luke xxiv. 41 and Acts xii. 14); ἀπὸ τοῦ θυμοῦ (Acts xx. 9); ἀπὸ τῆς δόξης (Acts xxii. 11). The phrase, thus understood, brings out the more markedly the thoroughly human conditions to which Christ was subjected. It was not in right of his sonship that he was heard. He won his hearing by his human piety; though he was Son, and as such knew that his Father heard him always (John xi. 42), he learnt humanly his lesson of obedience. In the expression, *καίπερ ἐν υἱός*, Son is surely meant in the peculiar sense in which it has all along been applied to Christ, expressing more than that his relation to God was that of any son to a father, and thus we perceive the full force of *καίπερ*. It is true that it was not till after the Resurrection that he attained his exalted position as Son (see under ch. i. 5 and v. 5); but still he was all along the Son, in virtue of his origin as well as of his destiny. Cf. *ἐλάλησεν ἡμῶν ἐν υἱῷ* (ch. i. 9). "Ὁν υἱός does not indeed, in itself, express that he was the Second Person of the Trinity (this application of the word *υἱός* being nowhere found in the Epistle); but it implies that, even in his state of humiliation, he was more than man; for there would be nothing very extraordinary, so as to justify *καίπερ*, in the case of an

ordinary son learning obedience to his father through suffering. Recurring now to the question raised under ver. 3, whether the high priest's obligation to offer in the first place for himself had any counterpart in the case of Christ, we may perceive such a counterpart in the agony, as above regarded. For, although for himself Christ needed no atonement, yet the "prayers and supplications" were offered in his own behalf, being due to his own entire participation in the conditions of humanity; the whole "agony and bloody sweat" were part of his own preparation and consecration for executing the office of a High Priest for others; and, like the Aaronic priest's offering for himself, they were the sign and evidence of his being one *μετριοπαθεῖν θυνάμενος*. Thus (*χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας* being all along understood) they answered truly to the preparatory part of Aaron's original consecration (Lev. viii. 14—ix. 15), or to the high priest's own offering, before his offering for the people and entering behind the veil, on the Day of Atonement (Lev. xiv. 6). It may be (though not necessarily so) that the word *προσενέγκας* in ver. 7, corresponding with *προσφέρειν* in ver. 3, is intended to suggest this analogy.

Vers. 9, 10.—And being made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the Author of eternal salvation; called (or rather so addressed) of God a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Here *τελειωθείς* (translated "being made perfect") refers to the time of his resurrection, when the sufferings were over and the atonement complete (cf. Luke xiii. 32, *τῇ τρίτῃ τελειοῦμαι*). The word may be used in its general sense of *perfected*, i.e. "being made perfectly that which he was intended to become" (Dehitzsch). In such sense St. Paul uses the word of himself, *Ὅχι ἔτι ἤδη τετελειώμαι* (Phil. iii. 12). Or the specific sense of priestly consecration may be here, as well as in ch. ii. 10 and vii. 28, intended. In ch. vii. 28 the A.V. renders *εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τετελειωμένον* by "consecrated for evermore." And this view is supported by passages in the LXX., where the word *τελείωσις* is used with special reference to the consecration of the high priest. Cf. *ἔστι γὰρ τελείωσις αὐτῇ* (Exod. xxix. 22); *τοῦ κροῦ τῆς τελείωσεως, ὃ ἐστὶν ἁρπῶν* (vers. 26, 27, 31); *τελείωσαι τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν* (vers. 29, 33, 35); *τῆς θυσίας τῆς τελείωσεως* (ver. 34); *τὸν δεύτερον κροῖον τῆς τελείωσεως* (Lev. viii. 22, 29); *ἀπὸ τοῦ κροῦ τῆς τελείωσεως* (ver. 26); *τὸ ὀλοκαύτωμα τῆς τελείωσεως* (ver. 28); *ἕως ἡμέρας πληρωθῇ, ἡμέρας τελείωσεως ὁμῶν* (ver. 33); also Lev. xxi. 10, where the high priest—*ὁ ἱερεὺς ὁ μέγας ἀπὸ τῶν ἀδελφῶν αὐτοῦ*—is described as *τοῦ ἐπικεχυμένου ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν τοῦ ἐλαίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τετελειωμένου ἐνδόξα-*

σθαι τὰ ἱμάτια. See also Gesenius on the Hebrew word *תָּקַן*. Hence, and in view of the drift of the passage before us, Jackson very decidedly regards *τελειωθείς* in ver. 9 as a *verbum solenne*, denoting specifically Christ's consecration to his eternal office of High Priest. So also Hammond and Whitty. Being thus perfected, or consecrated, he became, for ever afterwards, the Author, not of mere ceremonial cleansing or temporary remission of guilt, but of eternal salvation; *potentially* to all mankind (cf. *ὅτις πάντες*, ch. ii. 9), and *effectively* to "all them that obey him;" being addressed, in this his consummated position (the reference being to Ps. cx.) as "High Priest for ever," etc. Here again we perceive that it is not till after the Resurrection that the prophetic ideal of the Son at God's right hand, and of the eternal High Priest, are regarded as fully realized. If it be objected that his high priesthood must have begun *before* the Resurrection for his death upon the cross to be a true atonement, it may be replied that his one oblation of himself upon the cross at once consummated his consecration and effected the atonement. Doubtless, as a true High Priest on earth, he thus "offered one sacrifice for sins for ever" (ch. x. 12); all that is meant above is that it was not till after the Resurrection that he entered on his eternal office of mediation in virtue of that one accomplished sacrifice.

Ver. 11—ch. vii. 1.—This is the long admonitory digression (see under ver. 1) felt by the writer to be necessary before his exposition of *κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχizedek*. He is entering on a new theme, higher and less level to the comprehension of his readers than any that has gone before. Even so far, we have seen how their Jewish prejudices had evoked admonitions, frequently interposed in the course of the argument. Much more so now, when it is to be shown how the priesthood of Christ not only fulfils the idea of, but also supersedes, that of the sons of Aaron, being of a different order from theirs. The region of thought to be entered now, being that of "the mystery of Christ," transcends more than any that has been so far entered the ordinary conceptions of traditional Judaism. Hence the writer's shrinking from entering all at once on the subject for fear of not being even understood; hence his earnest warnings to his readers as to the necessity of advancing to the state of full-grown Christians who can discern spiritual things.

Ver. 11—ch. vi. 20.—INTERPOSED EXHORTATION.

Ver. 11.—Of whom (the most obvious antecedent being Melchizedek, but with regard to his typical significance, as referred to in Ps. cx.) we have many things to say (the

subject itself admits a lengthy exposition) and hard of interpretation, seeing ye are become (not, as in A.V., "ye are") dull of hearing. Their dulness is the reason of the λόγος being δυσεργηθέντος. It was not that the subject was in itself inexplicable, or that the writer was incompetent to explain it; his difficulty was in adapting the interpretation to the capacity of his readers: "Non scribentis, sed vestro vitio" (Bengel). It seems from γὰρ γίνεσθε ("ye are become"), in this and the following verse, that the Hebrew Christians had even retrograded in spiritual perception. This is easily conceivable. As, through the teaching of St. Paul especially, the tie between Christianity and Judaism became more and more broken, there was likely to be a certain reaction among the Hebrew Christians, who, having gone to a certain extent with the tide of thought, became conscious how far it was carrying them. They would be inclined to cling the more fondly to their old associations from the fear of losing them altogether. Such retrogressions have been observable in other times of upheaval of old ideas.

Ver. 12.—For when, by reason of the time (i.e. the time that has elapsed since your conversion), ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that some one teach you (or, that one teach you which be) the first principles (literally, the elements of the beginning) of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. Τῆς ἀρχῆς in this verse seems best taken in union with τὰ στοιχεῖα, rather than with τῶν λόγων; the phrase, τὰ στοιχεῖα τῆς ἀρχῆς, meaning "the initiatory elements"—the A, B, C of Christian teaching. The word λόγια ("oracles"), is used elsewhere for the revelations of the Old Testament, as Acts vii. 38; Rom. iii. 2. Here its meaning can hardly be taken as confined to them, since the first principles of the gospel are being spoken of. Still, a word that includes them in its meaning may be purposely used by way of intimating that the elements intended are those of Judaism as well as Christianity, or of the latter only in its first emergence out of Judaism. And accordingly, vers. 1, 2 of ch. vi., where they are enumerated, are (as will be seen) so worded as to imply no more than this; nor are the first principles there mentioned beyond what an enlightened Jew might be expected to understand readily. Be it observed that the Hebrew Church need not be supposed to have actually lost sight of these first principles, so as to require a new indoctrination into them. There may be a vein of delicate irony in what is said, after the manner of St. Paul. All that is of necessity implied is that there had been such a failure in seeing what these principles led to

as to suggest the necessity of their being learnt anew. The writer does not, in fact, as he goes on, require them to be learnt anew; for he bids his readers leave them behind, as though already known, and proceed from them to perfection, though still with some misgiving as to their capability for doing so. The figure of milk for babes and solid food for full-grown men, to illustrate the teaching suitable for neophytes and for advanced Christians, is found also in 1 Cor. iii. 1, 2; and that of ῥήριος in 1 Cor. xiv. 20; Gal. iv. 19; Eph. iv. 14. This correspondence, though no proof of the Pauline authorship, is among the evidences of the Pauline character of the Epistle.

Ver. 13.—For every one that partaketh of milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. Reason for saying that they are such as have need of milk; for milk is the nourishment of infants, and he that is an infant in respect of spiritual growth is ἀπειρος λόγου δικαιοσύνης: not of necessity unacquainted with it altogether, but still not versed in it; he is but a tyro. "Word of righteousness" may be taken as a general term to denote what we might call religious lore; referring here especially to the gospel, which is eminently the revelation of the "righteousness of God" (Rom. i. 17; cf. 2 Cor. iii. 9, ἡ δικαιοσύνη τῆς δικαιοσύνης; and xi. 15, διδόνον δικαιοσύνης); but not excluding a more general conception. There is no need to suppose an exclusive reference to the more perfect doctrine in opposition to the elements, since, of the whole subject of religious knowledge, the ῥήριος may be said to be ἀπειρος in the sense of being without the matured skill that experience gives. Hence, too, we are certainly not justified in finding in the phrase a specific allusion to the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith only, which is not suggested by the context or by what follows. Still less may we (with Delitzsch) so ignore the notable significance of δικαιοσύνη as to reduce the expression to a synonym for "rightly framed, that is sound and orthodox discourse."

Ver. 14.—But solid food is for them that are of full age (τελειών, equivalent to "perfect;" but in the sense of maturity of age or growth, in contrast with ῥήριοι; as in 1 Cor. xiv. 20; cf. 1 Cor. ii. 6; Eph. iv. 13; Phil. iii. 15), those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil. Here the comparison is carried out with peculiar aptness. Τὰ αἰσθητήρια in the illustration are the organs of sense. In the infant the digestive organs, in the first place, exercised in the beginning on milk, acquire through that exercise the power of assimilating more solid and

more complex food, while at the same time its sensitive organs generally, also through exercise, become consciously discriminative of "good and evil" (cf. Isa. vii. 15, 16, where "to know to refuse the evil and choose the good" denotes, as if proverbially, the age after early childhood). So, in the spiritual sphere, the mental faculties,

exercised at first on simple truths, should acquire by practice the power of apprehending and distinguishing between higher and more recondite ones. It was because the Hebrew Christians had failed thus to bring out their faculties that they were open to the charge of being still in a state of infancy.

HOMILETICS. :

Vers. 1—10.—*The high priesthood of Christ.* In these verses the author proceeds with his discussion of the priestly character and work of the Lord Jesus, as typified by the Aaronical priesthood.

I. WHAT A HIGH PRIEST IS. The office is a most honourable one; it is referred to in ver. 4 as "the honour." This will appear from a consideration of the high priest's functions and qualifications. 1. *His functions.* The most important of these are indicated in ver. 1. (1) *He acts for other men in things respecting their relations to God.* The root-idea of the office is that, while access to God is denied to sinners on the ground of nature, he has been pleased to grant it in connection with special arrangements of grace. (2) *He offers sacrifices*, both free-will offerings and sin offerings. As men are guilty, this is indispensable; and thus in common speech the terms "priest" and "sacrifice" are correlatives. There can be no priest without a sacrifice. 2. *His qualifications.* (1) *He must be human* (ver. 1)—a partaker of the nature that is to be redeemed. (2) *He must be humane* (ver. 2)—capable of considerate sympathy with the people for whom he mediates. How sadly opposite in character to this have the world's priests almost always been! How dark are the thoughts suggested by the word "priestcraft"! Priests have been arrogant, cruel, tyrants over conscience, enemies of progress, patrons of ignorance and error. But the typical priest is a man of culture and refinement, who has abjured the motto, "*Odi profanum vulgus et arceo*," and who, realizing his own frailty, "can bear gently with the ignorant and erring." (3) *He must have a sacrifice* (ver. 3)—"somewhat to offer." Without a sin offering priestly mediation would be impotent, and the holy and just God would remain inaccessible. (4) *He must be appointed by God.* (Ver. 4.) It is for God to decide whether he will allow himself to be approached at all on behalf of the guilty, and it belongs to him also to select the person whose mediation will be acceptable to him.

II. THE REALITY OF CHRIST'S HIGH PRIESTHOOD. The apostle goes on to show—but arranging his thoughts for the most part in the reverse order—that the Lord Jesus possesses all the needful qualifications for the high priesthood, and that he actually discharges its duties (vers. 5—10). 1. *He has the qualifications of a high priest.* (1) *He was appointed by God.* (Vers. 5, 6.) The reference to Ps. ii. suggests his perfect fitness for the office, and the quotation from Ps. cx. is a proof of his ordination by the irrevocable oath of God. (2) *He is a man.* (Vers. 7, 8.) Although God said to him, "My Son," he had taken "the form of a servant," and "in the days of his flesh" had "learned obedience." (3) *He is able to sympathize.* (Vers. 7, 8.) He passed through a course of the deepest affliction and the most dreadful temptation, that he might acquire the necessary experience for his work. He "suffered," not only at Nazareth and Capernaum, and during the whole period of his public ministry, but especially by means of the unparalleled agonies of Gethsemane and Golgotha. (4) *He offered himself as a sacrifice.* (Vers. 7, 8.) By his "obedience" Jesus effected complete reconciliation for sin. His trembling agony in the garden and the woe which he bore upon the tree are inexplicable on the principle that he was only a martyr, or on any other principle than that in some mysterious way he was thus bearing the wrath of God against sin. 2. *He discharges the duties of a high priest.* (Ver. 9.) The Saviour's acquisition of all the qualifications "made him perfect," i.e. officially all-accomplished as the Priest of mankind. He has procured for us everlasting salvation, and he bestows it upon all who obey him by faith. He has expiated sin. He has rendered God propitious. He gives his people access. He prays to God for them. In short, he performs all the duties of a high priest, and his priesthood has superseded every other.

III. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD AND THE AARONICAL. 1. Being personally holy, Jesus needed not to offer any sacrifice for himself (ver. 3). 2. He is both Priest and Victim (vers. 7, 8). 3. His priesthood really procures salvation (ver. 9), and not merely typically. 4. It is of a higher order than Aaron's, and was more fully represented by that of Melchizedek (ver. 10); for it is (1) intransferable and everlasting; (2) a royal priesthood, Christ being King as well as Priest.

LESSONS. 1. We, being guilty and sinful, can have intercourse with God only through Christ as our Priest. 2. We ought to cherish absolute confidence in his priestly power and sympathy. 3. Christian ministers are not "called of God" to be priests (ver. 4), and must beware of importing sacerdotal conceptions into the idea which they entertain of their office; yet every pastor should, like the model high priest of ancient times, "bear gently with the ignorant and erring."

Vers. 11—14.—*A sharp reproof for ignorance.* The apostle, having used the expression, "after the order of Melchizedek," remembers that his readers will not be likely to understand it without careful explanation. So he pauses in his argument to chide them for their backwardness in religious knowledge.

I. THE TRUTHS OF REVELATION ARE PROFOUND AND FAR-REACHING. The story of God's love in redemption may, no doubt, be called with propriety "the simple gospel;" but, while it is so, it exhibits at the same time "the manifold wisdom of God." The Bible is not merely a book; it is a literature. It does not simply contain a message of mercy; it is the record of a long and gradually developing process of redeeming grace. It may be studied profoundly from many different standpoints, as e.g. those of history, of dogmatic theology, of morals, of ecclesiology, etc. The Bible deals, too, with all the deepest and most wonderful of themes, such as the human soul, the problem of sin, God, eternity, and immortality. So there is spiritual food in Holy Scripture, at once for the shallowest and the profoundest minds. Revelation supplies not only "milk" for "babes in Christ," i.e. the alphabet and rudiments of religious knowledge, but "solid food" for "full-grown men," i.e. materials for the more recondite study of Christianity as a great and harmonious system of Divine truth.

II. CHRISTIANS DIFFER IN THE DEGREE OF THEIR SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE. They differ because: 1. *Some are "babes."* Believers who are young in years, and those of maturer age who have newly come to the knowledge of the truth, require to be fed with the "milk" or simplest elements of religious instruction. 2. *Some are "full-grown men,"* who can relish and digest the "solid food" of the Word. An advanced Christian who is a diligent student of Scripture will acquire so firm a grasp of truth as to become qualified to act the part of a "teacher" in the Church (ver. 12). His proficiency in knowledge will sharpen his spiritual perceptions, so that he will learn readily to distinguish between "good and evil" in doctrine (ver. 14). 3. *Some are "invalids."* The apostle chides his Hebrew readers for having become such, as the result of their disregard of the laws of spiritual health. It was now many years since they had first believed, and by this time they should have been adults in Christian knowledge—quick of apprehension in relation to the higher reaches of truth. So far, however, from being able to assimilate the "solid food" of the Word, they had degenerated into spiritual weaklings and invalids. They heard the gospel indolently (ver. 11). The "solid food" which they had once enjoyed now occasioned them the miseries of dyspepsia. They could digest nothing but gospel "milk." In our own time, too, there are many such invalids. What multitudes attend church through the years, and yet never get beyond the attainments of the sabbath school! How many otherwise intelligent men are quite ignorant of the organic structure of the Bible! How many betray an utter want of living interest in the doctrines and truths of the New Testament!

III. REASONS WHY THE RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE OF MANY CHRISTIANS IS SO DEFECTIVE. The Hebrews were "dull of hearing" because they had got divided in heart between Christianity and Judaism, and because they were beset with temptations to apostatize from a faith which had involved them in much trial. Now, our temptations are substantially similar. Our hearts are prone to try to serve both God and mammon; and we are tempted to avoid very intimate acquaintance with a religion faithfulness to which demands from us very serious sacrifices. In addition to these fundamental reasons others may be indicated, as follows: 1. *The want of earnest Bible study.* The

hurry of the age acts on the side of spiritual ignorance. Other studies and pursuits are clamorous in their claims; those *e.g.* of business, politics, literature, philosophy, science, art. Thus many Christians do not read the Bible systematically, or with sufficient intellectual effort. The larger part of the Old Testament is, to their minds, a kind of desert of Sahara. Perhaps they interest themselves only in isolated texts, apart from the scope of the passage in which these occur. 2. *Neglect of parental instruction.* Every parent is bound to sow the seeds of Divine truth in the minds and hearts of his children. Where this duty becomes generally neglected the rising generation can only continue one of spiritual infants. 3. *Irregularity in attendance upon God's house.* (Ch. x. 25.) Church-going is not religion, but as it is a divinely appointed ordinance, a man need not expect to grow in grace and in Christian knowledge without it. 4. *Unedifying preaching.* The consecutive exposition of Scripture from the pulpit, when wisely and skilfully done, trains a people into "experience of the Word of righteousness." The congregation which receives no instruction of this kind may be expected to become "dull of hearing." 5. *Misconception of what adequate religious knowledge is.* Many good people judge that, having apprehended and embraced "the simple gospel," they have finished their spiritual education. They love a few pet texts which express "the rudiments of the first principles" (ver. 12), and are content to leave the rest of the Bible alone. They count it a virtue to relish only "evangelistic preaching," and seem even proud of occupying always only the first form in the school of Christ. But the fruit of their neglect of the truth in its higher and deeper and broader aspects becomes apparent in the imperfection of their Christian character, and in their lack of progress towards perfection.

IV. THE IMPORTANCE OF AN INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH. 1. *Reverence to God* requires it. He has not given any portion of his Word in vain. Intelligent Christians dishonour him when they do not "press on unto perfection" as students of the Bible in every department of its glorious design and drift and method. 2. *Duty to our own souls* requires it. If we would not become spiritual dwarfs, but "full-grown men," we must "search the Scriptures." If we would be truly happy and prosperous, we must "meditate on God's law day and night." 3. *Usefulness to others* requires it. Believers who have become established in knowledge and grace are expected to serve the Lord Jesus as "teachers" (ver. 12). A Christian, too, should be "ready always to give answer to every man that asketh him a reason concerning the hope that is in him."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 2.—*An essential qualification for successful ministry.* "Who can have compassion on the ignorant," etc. According to our reading of the New Testament, the Christian ministry is not a priesthood except in the sense that, being Christians, ministers belong to that "holy priesthood," that "royal priesthood," of which every true Christian is a member. Yet there were certain qualifications of the Aaronic priesthood which are indispensable to the usefulness of the Christian ministry. One of these is mentioned in our text; its nature will appear as we proceed. The text suggests—

I. THAT SINS DIFFER IN THE DEGREE OF THEIR GUILT. In this respect several things have to be taken into account. 1. *There are differences in the sins themselves.* The wickedness of sins of presumption is far greater than that of sins of ignorance (cf. Numb. xv. 27—31). Sins of rebellion are far removed from sins of error. The persons mentioned in our text are not those who have sinned "with a high hand" but "the ignorant and erring"—those who have sinned by reason of moral "infirmity," or who have wandered from the way of truth and duty because of their own spiritual negligence. Such sinners are by no means guiltless, but they are much less guilty than some others. 2. *There are differences in the conditions and circumstances in which sins are committed.* The force of the solicitation to sin, the strength of inherited tendency to certain forms of moral evil, the quality of the moral atmosphere surrounding the sinner,—these greatly differ amongst men; and this and other considerations must be carefully weighed before the guilt of any sin can be fairly estimated. "Two persons may commit the same identical crime, yet the guilt may be inconceivably

greater in the one case than the other. The one may have had no instruction, no benefit from parental culture, no faithful admonitions, no holy example to direct and regulate, no warning to restrain, no encouragement to animate in the path. The other may have been surrounded by all the helps and inducements to right consideration—to holy fear, to correct conduct—and therefore his sin is marked with a far higher degree of aggravation than the sin of the other; and thus, in the sight of God, the judge on the bench often may be far more guilty than the criminal at the bar."

II. THE WISE AND GOOD MINISTER TO SOULS WILL PRACTICALLY RECOGNIZE THESE DIFFERENCES IN THE GUILT OF SIN. Only the Omniscient can perfectly discriminate in this respect, yet the text indicates a discrimination and consideration which every one who would minister helpfully to souls will endeavour to exercise. 1. *He will not harshly condemn sinners.* He is *merciful*. On the one hand, he is not unfeeling; on the other, he is not carried away by his feelings, but he regulates and moderates his feelings; he has control over his passions. 2. *He will endeavour to discriminate sins of ignorance and error from sins of a darker hue.* He will deal thoughtfully with souls, not regarding all sinners as equally guilty or all sins as equally heinous. In so doing he will be following precedents of unquestionable authority. Our Lord and his apostles thus discriminated, and made merciful allowance for the ignorance and error of sinners (see Luke xxiii. 34; Acts iii. 17; 1 Tim. i. 18; 1 Pet. ii. 25). 3. *He will treat the ignorant and the erring with gentleness.* He will "have compassion on the ignorant," etc.; margin, "reasonably bear with;" Revised Version, "who can bear gently with the ignorant and erring." How beautiful and sublime is our Saviour's example in this respect! For his crucifiers he prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

III. THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF HIS OWN MORAL INFIRMITY SHOULD INDUCE THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER TO DEAL THUS GENTLY WITH THE IGNORANT AND THE ERRING. "For that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." 1. *His own moral infirmity qualifies him to understand the moral ignorances and errors of others.* He has had to contend against sinful inclinations and Satanic temptations. He knows from his own experience how easily the soul is sometimes led astray, and he can enter into the moral wanderings and sorrowful returnings of others. 2. *His own moral infirmity should lead him to be patient and gentle with the ignorant and erring.* He has himself required and received forbearance at the hands of both God and man. He will very probably need similar forbearance in time to come. How, then, can he be intolerant or harsh with others? Our own need of mercy and patience from others, and pre-eminently from God, should lead us to be merciful and patient with others.

The chief lesson of our subject is applicable to all who would render spiritual services to their fellow-men. Let parents, and instructors of the young, and preachers of the gospel, and pastors of Churches, ever remember that if they would benefit the ignorant and erring they must be forbearing and gentle with them. Sternness and severity will repel and discourage, and probably aggravate moral infirmity into moral perversity. But patience and charity will encourage worthy hopes in the breasts of those who have gone astray, and restore them to the path of truth and duty, and inspire them to more earnest and patient efforts in Christian life and service. Be it ours, not to condemn the ignorant and erring, but to instruct and restore them.—W. J.

VER. 7, 8.—*The suffering Saviour.* "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered," etc. Our text suggests the following observations:—

I. IN THE DAYS OF HIS FLESH OUR LORD ENDURED SEVEREST SUFFERINGS. "The things which he suffered" induced the agonizing prayer, the "strong crying and tears." He bore the common sufferings of our humanity; e.g. hunger, thirst, weariness, etc. He suffered from the cruel ingratitude of men, from the base slanders of his enemies, and from the subtle and sinful solicitations of Satan. His sensitive and holy soul suffered keenly from his contact with so much of sin and sorrow and pain in this world. But the particular reference in the text is to his anguish in Gethsemane. How sore was his sorrow, how terrible his agony, upon that occasion! "He began to be greatly amazed and sore troubled: and he saith, My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death."

II. IN HIS SUFFERINGS OUR LORD SOUGHT RELIEF IN PRAYER. "He offered up
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prayers and supplications," etc. (ver. 7). Notice: 1. *The Being to whom he addressed his prayer.* "Unto him that was able to save him from death," i.e. to the great Sovereign of both life and death; "the God in whose hand our breath is," who "giveth to all life and breath and all things, . . . in whom we live and move and have our being." Our Saviour directed his prayer to his Father, saying, "O my Father," etc. 2. *The object which he sought in his prayer.* This is not mentioned here; but it is in the narrative of the conflict in Gethsemane. "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me." From what did the Saviour recoil so shudderingly? Certainly neither from mere death, nor from "the dread of something after death." The pains of dissolution could not have affrighted him, and beyond death there was nothing to dismay or repel him. But death, with all the dread significance and terrible circumstances such as awaited him, he shrank from in intense spiritual pain. This has been forcibly expressed by Dr. Farrar: "It was something far deadlier than death. It was the burden and the mystery of the world's sin which lay heavy on his heart; it was the tasting, in the Divine humanity of a sinless life, the bitter cup which sin had poisoned; it was the bowing of Godhead to endure a stroke to which man's apostasy had lent such frightful possibilities. It was the sense, too, of how virulent, how frightful, must have been the force of evil in the universe of God which could render necessary so infinite a sacrifice. It was the endurance, by the perfectly guiltless, of the worst malice which human hatred could devise; it was to experience, in the bosom of perfect innocence and perfect love, all that was detestable in human ingratitude, all that was pestilent in human hypocrisy, all that was cruel in human rage. It was to brave the last triumph of Satanic spite and fury, uniting against his lonely head all the flaming arrows of Jewish falsity and heathen corruption—the concentrated wrath of the rich and respectable, the yelling fury of the blind and brutal mob. It was to feel that his own, to whom he came, loved darkness rather than light—that the race of the chosen people could be wholly absorbed in one insane repulsion against infinite goodness and purity and love. Through all this he passed in that hour which, with a recoil of sinless horror beyond our capacity to conceive, foretasted a worse bitterness than the worst bitterness of death."¹ This was the cup which he prayed might pass away from him. 3. *The intensity with which he wryed his prayer.* This is indicated (1) by the fact that two words, which are nearly synonymous, are used to express his prayer. He "offered up prayers and supplications." The conjunction of synonymous words is "a mode of expressing intensity, which is very frequent in the sacred writings." (2) By his "strong crying." The loud cries were the expression of agonized feeling and of earnest entreaty. (3) By his "tears." Great natures weep, but not for trifles. Their tears indicate deep emotion. Our Lord's tears in Gethsemane welled up from a "soul exceeding sorrowful," and were significant of a painful fervency of supplication. "Being in an agony he prayed more earnestly," etc. (Luke xxii. 44).

III. IN ANSWER TO HIS PRAYER OUR LORD OBTAINED SUPPORT IN HIS SUFFERINGS.

1. *The nature of the answer to his prayer.* Not exemption from the cup, but victory over the dread of it, and support in drinking it. He was fortified for his future sufferings and trials, and sustained in them. "There appeared unto him an angel from heaven, strengthening him." His personal wishes were now lost in the perfect will of his Father. His dread anxieties are gone, and he is divinely calm. His trembling fears have departed, and he is sublimely courageous. Henceforth, even unto the bitter end, he is serene in sternest sufferings, patient under the most irritating provocations, a meek yet majestic Conqueror. Such was the Father's answer to his prayer. And every true prayer which is offered to God is answered by him, though not always by granting the specific requests (cf. 2 Cor. xii. 7—10). 2. *The reason of the answer to his prayer.* "And was heard in that he feared;" margin, "for his piety;" Revised Version, "Having been heard for his godly fear;" Alford, "Having been heard by reason of his reverent submission." His pious resignation to the holy will of his Father was the ground upon which his prayer was answered, and the victory was given unto him. "Nevertheless," said he, "not as I will, but as Thou wilt. . . . O my Father, if this cannot pass away, except I drink it, thy will be

¹ 'The Life of Christ,' ch. lvii.

done." When we can thus say, "Thy will be done," we have already an instalment of the answer to our prayers, and the fulness of the blessing will not tarry.

IV. BY HIS SUFFERINGS HIS OBEDIENCE TO THE HOLY WILL OF HIS FATHER WAS PERFECTED. "Though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience by," etc. His obedience as a Son was always perfect. His obedience here spoken of is obedience in suffering. As his obedience became more difficult, involving more and more of self-renunciation, and pain ever increasing in severity, he still obeyed. He willed to endure the sharpest, sternest sufferings rather than fail even in the slightest degree in his practical loyalty to the perfect will of his Father. "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." This obedience he learned, as he proceeded step by step along his painful path, until the lesson was finished and the obedience was consummated on the cross. All Christ's disciples need the discipline of suffering to perfect them in the practice of the Father's will (cf. Matt. xvi. 24).—W. J.

Ver. 9.—*Salvation—its Author and its recipients.* "And being made perfect, he became the Author," etc. The subject of the writer in this part of his Epistle is the high priesthood of Jesus Christ. In treating this subject he dwells upon the sufferings of Christ in his priestly office, and a certain perfection which resulted from his sufferings. He was God's only and well-beloved Son, yet he was not exempt from suffering. "He learned obedience by the things which he suffered." We must not suppose that he was not perfectly acquainted with the nature of obedience, or that he did not fully recognize the duty of it, or that he was in any way indisposed to render it, before he suffered. The meaning is that though he was so highly exalted in his relationship to the Father, yet "he was subjected to learn experimentally what it is to obey in the midst of suffering." He learned the lesson perfectly. He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Our text leads us to consider three things.

I. THE PERFECTION WHICH CHRIST ATTAINED THROUGH SUFFERING. "And having been made perfect." Having assumed human nature, Christ was capable of suffering; and in that nature he did indeed suffer. His entire life upon earth was one of humiliation and sacrifice. Being sympathetic, the sufferings of men were a constant grief to him. Being holy, the sins of men constantly stung his soul with pain. At the last his sufferings deepened into awful intensity. In Gethsemane his sorrow and conflict almost brought down his human nature unto death. And on the cross his pain and woe were unutterable, and to us inconceivably severe. Of all sufferers Christ is the *Sufferer*. In all these sufferings he was obedient. He endured them voluntarily. Through his obedience in suffering he became perfect. The author of our salvation was made "perfect through sufferings" (ch. ii. 10). This acquired perfection was *not personal*. As God he is eternally perfect; as man he was perfect without suffering. The perfection of our text is *relative*. By suffering he became perfect in his relation to us as our Saviour, our Intercessor, our great High Priest. By suffering: 1. *He made a perfect atonement for sin.* 2. *He became perfectly qualified to sympathize with and to succour his suffering people.* (Cf. ch. iv. 14—16.) 3. *He became a perfect example for his people in their sufferings.* 4. *He entered upon his perfect triumph and glory.* (Cf. ch. ii. 9; xii. 2; Phil. ii. 5—11.)

II. THE GREAT END BOTH OF CHRIST'S SUFFERING AND OF HIS PERFECTION ACQUIRED THROUGH HIS SUFFERING. This end was that he might be the Author, or the great procuring cause, of a perfect salvation for men. "Being made perfect, he became the Author of eternal salvation." Here are three points. 1. *The salvation.* Forgiveness of sin, freedom from condemnation, deliverance from the sovereignty of sin, the awakening of a new ruling principle and power in man, conversion into a condition of holiness, peace and joy, entrance into heaven, blessed union with God. 2. *The perpetuity of salvation.* "Eternal salvation." No partial, incomplete, temporary blessing; but "eternal salvation"—"the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." Does not this, at least, suggest that there is no falling back from the hand of Christ into the power of Satan? Doubtless man always can do so, inasmuch as he is morally free; but this "eternal salvation" establishes man's freedom, yet binds it to holiness, and leads him to cry, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." This blessing shall continue when bonds and banks, estates and fortunes, coronets and crowns, shall have perished. Blessed be the Lord for his "eternal salvation"! 3. *The Author of salvation.* Our

salvation is owing to Jesus Christ. The ministry of providence, of religious ordinances, and of good men, may assist us in availing ourselves of this salvation; but they cannot save us; they are not "the cause of salvation." Our salvation originated in the infinite love of God. "God so loved the world," etc. Our salvation was effected by his Son, our Saviour. He became man, taught, laboured, suffered, lived, died, and ever lives to save us. He is our only Saviour. The great end of his sufferings was our "eternal salvation."

III. THE RECIPIENTS OF THIS SALVATION. "Unto all them that obey him." This, of course, does not mean that we merit salvation by obeying the Saviour. But those who have merely some doctrinal knowledge of Christ and his salvation, those who have only a dead faith in him, a mere intellectual assent to the great facts of his history and teaching, are not partakers of his salvation. As he attained his mediatorial perfection and glory by complete and hearty obedience to his Father, so must man obey him if we would attain unto "eternal salvation." Salvation is found in obedience to him, because: 1. *True and saving faith inspires the life and shapes the conduct.* (Cf. Acts xv. 9; Rom. xvi. 26; Gal. v. 6; Jas. ii. 17—26.) 2. *Christ saves men from their sins.* He is a Prince to rule us, as well as a Saviour to deliver us. 3. *All who are being saved by Christ love him, and the loving heart delights to obey the loved One.* 4. *The disobedient cannot enter heaven.* Heaven is a realm of perfect obedience to the supreme will, of loyal and loving devotion to God's service. Unless the spirit of hearty obedience be ours, we are out of sympathy with heaven.

CONCLUSION. 1. *Trust this perfect Saviour.* 2. *Obey him.* Copy his own obedience.
—W. J.

Vers. 11—14.—*Spiritual obtuseness.* "Of whom we have many things to say," etc. In treating of the analogy between the priesthood of Melchizedek and that of Christ, the writer was hindered by the spiritual obtuseness of his readers. "We have many things to say, and difficult of interpretation, seeing ye are become dull of hearing." The writer found it difficult to explain his subject to them, because they were so dull and slow in their apprehension. Notice—

I. SPIRITUAL OBTUSENESS IS SOMETIMES VERY GREAT. It was so in the case of the persons here addressed, as may be seen by contrasting what they might and ought to have been and what they were. They should have been able to have taught others; they really needed teaching themselves, and that of the most elementary kind. "When ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God." They required instructing again in "the beginnings of the beginning" of Christian doctrine. Moreover, when they should have been men in spiritual intelligence, they were only babes. "And are become such as have need of milk," etc. It is pitiful and painful to reflect upon the prevalence of spiritual obtuseness in our own age. How many Christians are perfectly content and self-satisfied having only the barest rudiments of Scripture truth! Some even pride themselves in holding "the truth," as though they had grasped and mastered all truth; and in their firm adherence to "the simple gospel," as though there were no profundities and sublimities in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We fear that the Bible is far more widely circulated than read, and far more extensively read than studied or understood.

II. SPIRITUAL OBTUSENESS IS SOMETIMES SINFUL. We say "sometimes;" for when this dulness of perception or difficulty of apprehension arises from original deficiency of faculty, or from the scarcity of opportunities for progress in acquaintance with Christian truth, no moral blame attaches to it. It is deplorable, but not censurable. To whom only little is given, of him only little will be required. But in the case before us the writer says, "For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers," etc. Let us look at the argument expressed or implied here. 1. *Time and opportunities for progress had been given to them.* "By reason of the time" since they became Christians they should have made sufficient advancement to have been able to have instructed others. Therefore the time must have been considerable. 2. *There should have been a proportion between the opportunities afforded and the progress made.* This is clearly implied in the text. It is also righteous and reasonable. 3. *The existence of spiritual obtuseness notwithstanding opportunities of progress is morally wrong.*

Such spiritual dulness is not a misfortune, but a sin. It is an evidence of opportunities of progress neglected, of responsibilities unacknowledged or unfulfilled, and, it may be, of sins indulged in. Purity of heart and the power of perceiving spiritual truth are closely related. Slowness of spiritual apprehension often arises from the corruption of the heart. The pure heart is quick and true in its perceptions. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God." Worldliness of spirit also dims and diminishes the perceptive powers of the soul. If a man's eyes are ever fixed upon the earth, how can he see the brilliance and beauty of the starry heavens? If a man's affections are fixed upon the material and perishable things of this present world, he will gradually lose his power for perceiving the ethereal and perennial beauty of religious truth, or even for perceiving such truth at all.

III. SPIRITUAL OBTUSENESS INVOLVES SERIOUS LOSS. 1. *Loss to the community.* In cases like that mentioned in the text, the obtuse persons ought to be able to teach others, at least the elementary truths of Christianity. Parents should be able to instruct their children; the Christian should be able to help his friend who is seeking for life and truth, etc. 2. *Loss to the individual.* The man of dull spiritual apprehension loses the fuller and higher teaching. The full beauty of the landscape is not for the man of diseased or impaired physical vision. In like manner the beauty and sublimity of Divine truth and the serene splendours of holiness are invisible to those who are spiritually obtuse. Or, changing the figure, the food of moral manhood is not for them; they are unable to assimilate it, and must needs be limited to the dietary of babyhood.

Several practical and profitable reflections arise from our subject. 1. *The need of adaptation in Christian teaching.* The sacred writings contain "milk for babes," "solid food for full-grown men," and food suited for all the intermediate stages of the Christian life. The wise teacher will endeavour to distribute to each the food suited to his condition. 2. *The obligatoriness of progress in Christian discipleship.* Infancy has its charms, but not as a permanent state. Infancy must pass on by orderly development into manhood. Continuous spiritual infancy is unnatural and sinful. A permanent milk diet in the spiritual life indicates a stationariness which is unhealthy and culpable (cf. Eph. iv. 11—15). 3. *In the mature stage of Christian life there is the qualification for the exercise of discrimination in spiritual things.* "Full-grown men by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil." Their spiritual faculties are trained and disciplined, and so they are able to distinguish between the true and false, the superior and the inferior, in Christian teaching. Alas, that the people who are least mature are generally the most forward in exercising this critical function! 4. *We see why the ministry of the gospel is sometimes comparatively ineffectual.* In some instances the smallness of its success is owing to the want of adaptation in the ministry itself; in others, to the sinful and almost insuperable spiritual obtuseness of the hearers thereof.—W. J.

Vers. 1—6.—*Christ's Divine appointment to the high priesthood the fulfilment of one essential qualification for that position.* This begins the third great section of the Epistle. Section i. (ch. i. and ii.) sets forth the Deity and humanity of the Lord Jesus; Christ's superiority to the angels through whose ministration the old dispensation was said to be established. Section ii. (ch. iii. and iv.) sets forth the surpassing greatness of our Lord as compared with Moses, the great leader of the old dispensation. Section iii. (ch. v.—x.) sets forth our Lord greater than Aaron, the representative of the purely religious element of the old dispensation. Christ infinitely greater than all these, and therefore the new covenant in him infinitely better than the old—that now is the writer's argument. The first ten verses of ch. v. are an introduction to the third section. Before Christ's fulfilment of high priestly work is discussed, it is necessary to show that he does actually hold that position. Christ is really High Priest; the first proof of that is in the passage before us. Subject—*Christ's Divine appointment to the high priesthood the fulfilment of one essential qualification for that position.*

I. CONSIDER THE FACT OF MEDIATION BETWEEN GOD AND MAN. The high priest was "appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." "Gifts" equivalent to, those of God to men—reconciliation and

benediction. "Sacrifices for sins" equivalent to, those of men to God; that is, he was charged to manage the concerns of his brethren with the Most High, holding an intermediate position. What was the necessity for such an intermediary? 1. *It was a witness to the sinfulness of man.* One tribe was set apart for the service of the tabernacle. Only one family of this might enter the sacred building, Aaron and his four sons; five persons in all out of the thousands of Israel, and these only permitted to undertake their duties after solemn rules of consecration. But of this family, only one might pass into the most holy place, and he but once in a year, and then only in a manner which must have impressed him deeply with the sanctity of the place. Nothing could more clearly show the distance at which sin had placed man from God. 2. *The fact of mediation is a declaration that the broken intercourse between God and man can be renewed.* In Eden God communed with man, but sin broke this communion. Sinful man could only say with Cain, "From thy face shall I be hid, and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond." But when the doctrine of mediation was taught—and that must have been very early, for it underlies the idea of sacrifice—how great a door of hope was suddenly opened before them! The intervention of another might yet be, like Jacob's ladder, the means of communication between heaven and earth. 3. *The fact of mediation is a testimony to the principle of substitution.* This principle which underlies the New Testament system no less underlies the Old; it runs through the entire Word of God as the principle which keeps it together. Mediation is representation. The high priest represented the people before God. God treated with him on their behalf. What they could not do for themselves, he did.

II. THE NECESSITY THAT THE MEDIATOR SHOULD BE DIVINELY APPOINTED. The stress of the passage is on the word "appointed." 1. *This is necessary to ensure the Divine acceptance of the Mediator.* Man has no rights, no power, he is helpless and undone, entirely dependent on the mercy of the offended God. He, therefore, can have no assurance that his representative will be accepted apart from the Divine appointment of him; but that gives perfect assurance. He whom God has appointed to draw near to him on our behalf cannot draw near in vain. 2. *This Divine appointment is necessary to show the good will of God to those for whom mediation is made.* "If man appointed his own mediator it would only show his yearning after God, but when God appoints the mediator it shows God's yearning after him." Man could not devise the idea of one to present his case before God; the will would be wanting. Before there could be any movement towards heaven, God himself must work; there must be the upward drawing before the upward tendency. God must always precede our desire for him. The desire for a mediator, the fact of a divinely appointed Mediator, prove that God is on our side. 3. *This Divine appointment is necessary to secure the fulfilment of the mediatorial work, or, at least, for one assurance of this.* We expect that "what is no one's work" will remain undone. A special appointment is necessary if we are to enjoy confidence. Now, for the removal of our doubts as to whether our wants really are made known to God, the sacrifice for our sin really presented, etc., there is the fact that one Person of the Divine Trinity has been set apart for this purpose. That being so, not in the least particular will the mediatorial duties be unfulfilled.

III. THE FULFILMENT OF THIS NECESSITY IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. "So also Christ," etc. 1. *The Father hath appointed Christ to this work.* Could our case be in better hands? He is no stranger to us. We have seen him, and walked with him, and lived with him in the Gospel history. Could we choose, with whom would we leave ourselves as with Jesus? 2. *The Divine dignity of Christ adds yet greater worth to this appointment.* "Thou art my Son." The Divine Son has free access to the Father, and to his ear and heart. What he asks the Father desires; for he and his Father are one. For him to plead for us is for God to plead with himself for us. Moreover, as God he is omniscient and untiring and infinitely loving, so that none of our needs escape him. 3. *The fact that Christ regards this position as one of glory adds still further worth to the Divine appointment.* "Christ glorified not himself to be," etc. He counts it a glory to be our Mediator; then behold how he loves us! How certainly he will fulfil this work; for he is jealous of his glory!—O. N.

Vers. 7—10.—*Christ's human experience the second qualification for high priestly work.* The second proof that Christ holds the high priestly position. In vers. 1, 2

the double qualification for this is shown—a qualification Godward and manward; he must be appointed by God, and able to sympathize with man. Both these are shown to be true of Christ, and that he is, therefore, *officially* “perfect” (vers. 9, 10).

I. THE NECESSITY THAT THE HIGH PRIEST SHOULD HAVE PERSONAL ACQUAINTANCE WITH HUMAN EXPERIENCE. He “must be taken from among men.” 1. *Apart from this he could be no true representative of mankind.* Human obedience to the Divine Law was required of men. Christ undertook, as [their Representative, to meet all requirements; that made the Incarnation a necessity. Christ must keep the Law on the same footing on which Adam stood when he came from God’s hand. So, likewise, bearing man’s penalty, he must assume a nature which could die. That is, he must become man. 2. *Apart from this he could not secure the confidence of the people.* Christ need not pass through human experience in order to understand it; he understands it by his omniscience. But the infirmity of human faith can better confide in the sympathy of one who, it knows, has personally endured its trials.

II. THE FULFILMENT OF THIS QUALIFICATION IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. “Who in the days of his flesh,” etc. 1. *An illustration of Christ’s deep experience of human suffering.* The reference is, evidently, to Gethsemane. What could have affected the Saviour then so intensely? Not the anticipation of physical anguish, for then he would have fallen lower than the martyrs; not the dread of rejection by the people, for he had already endured that with great calmness; not the fear of the act of death, for he spoke of that with joy: “If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because,” etc. It could only have been because death would be to him what it could be to none other—the bearing of the world’s sin, the experience of sin’s doom. But why does the writer refer to this, but because it is the culminating point of our Lord’s suffering? He leads them to look at Jesus when he has reached the deepest depth of suffering possible. However deep his people’s darkness, Jesus has gone deeper still. He knows the lowest, therefore also the intermediate stages. 2. *An illustration of the pain involved in submitting our will to God.* “He learned obedience by the things which he suffered.” Obedience is *submission of the will to God*. That was the burden of the prayer in Gethsemane. He laid his will absolutely at the Father’s feet. Christ did not learn to be obedient. He came to do God’s will; that was his meat and drink. He did always (from the first) those things which please the Father. He learned obedience—came to know what it means for the flesh to submit ever to the will of Heaven; what it is to obey God amidst human frailties, pains, temptations. 3. *An illustration of Christ’s dependence for fidelity on heavenly helps.* He prayed to be saved (not “from”) “out of death;” not that death might be averted—for his prayer “was heard”—but that he might be delivered out of it. Divine support was given, and a glorious resurrection. Christ, as man, had no inherent power by reason of his Deity for what, as man, he had to do and bear. He stood on man’s footing. Perhaps nothing brings him closer to us than that for all he needed he had to cling to God in trustful supplication as we have, and receive delivering and sustaining grace because thereof as we do.

III. THE WORTH TO HIS PEOPLE OF CHRIST’S FULFILMENT OF THIS QUALIFICATION. He was thus “made perfect”—perfect as to his fulness for high priestly work. Then: 1. *The perfection of Christ’s priesthood makes every other priesthood needless.* He is “a high priest after the order of Melchizedek;” not in the Aaronic order, not thus for Israel after the flesh, but “for all those who obey him,” i.e. submit to him. Christ, High Priest for every sinner who yields himself to him; and for this he is perfect. Then what room for any other mediator? 2. *The power of sympathy in a God who has himself suffered.* For perfect repose we must have one of whose fellow-feeling we are assured by his experience of our own trials. If we only knew God in heaven, we might revere, obey, trust, love him; but we could not put our head on his bosom and weep there. But when we see that there is not a trial we experience whose counterpart we cannot find in his earthly life, we can rest in the Lord. 3. *The humiliation and woe by which alone our salvation was secured.* See how Christ shrank from Calvary, and yet how he advanced to it with unswerving willingness, and thus “became the Author,” etc. That leaves on the mind two deep impressions: (1) the baseness of making light of what was bought at such a cost; and (2) the terror of that wrath which shall overtake the impenitent, since such was the experience of the Son of God when he stooped to the penalty of sin.—C. N.

Ver. 11—ch. vi. 3.—*The evil of inability to apprehend the deeper truths about Christ.* This begins a parenthesis continued to end of ch. vi. The writer has come to the chief illustration of his great theme—the pre-eminence of the Lord Jesus; but he has hardly entered on this section before he feels himself unable to give full utterance to what he sees of the Redeemer's greatness, because of the dulness of spiritual perception in his hearers. He fears their religious condition will prevent their following him as he tries to scale the more inaccessible heights, and he cannot restrain an utterance of sorrow, and a solemn warning of the connection between ignorance of these things and apostasy from the Son of God. The subject of the *whole* parenthesis, therefore, is—*The danger of apostasy which lies concealed in the immature apprehension of Christian truth*; but of *the part*, in these verses, the following is the subject—*The evil of inability to apprehend the deeper truths about Christ.*

I. THE TREASURES OF TRUTH WHICH ARE HIDDEN IN THE LORD JESUS. "Of whom we have many things to say," etc. Why should the writer preface this particular part of his subject with a reference to its difficulty, since no such reference is attached to the equally profound truths of previous chapters? There is no necessity to attach this reference only to what follows; it may look backward as well as forward. The apostle is in the midst of his theme—the greatness, the fulness, the preciousness of Christ, which he knows not how to utter—and is more likely to feel its difficulty there than at the beginning. 1. *The treasures hidden in Christ are, of necessity, infinitely great, because he is the Revelation of the character and will of God.* "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." He is the perfect expression of God's love to man. He is the Fountain of all good. He is the embodiment of what the Father desires us to have and be. He is the utterance of what God would say to man. When we think of Christ, therefore, we are but children standing on the shore of an ocean whose further side has never been seen nor reached, and whose depth no human line can fathom. 2. *But, in as far as this is revealed through God's Word, it is intended to be understood.* It will require an endless life to understand it perfectly. Growing knowledge resulting in growing gratitude, love, and devotion,—this, perpetuated without end, is the bright future before us. But, however much we cannot know in the present, Scripture contains a revelation of such fulness in the Saviour as the wisest and best have not yet understood and appreciated; and what is revealed here and now, is obviously intended here and now to be apprehended. We cannot overrate the Saviour's desire to reveal himself, the deep things of his heart, and the best glories of his nature to his beloved, nor the Father's will that, as far as on earth it can be received, that revelation should be theirs.

II. THE HINDRANCES TO OUR POSSESSION OF THESE TREASURES. "How is it that ye do not understand?" Why do we know so little about Christ? Why are the Scriptures to us to a great extent sealed? This passage reveals three reasons for this. 1. *Spiritual feebleness.* The Hebrews had lost their early religious vigour. "When by reason of the time [since ye became Christians] ye ought to be," etc. Their condition was one of retrogression. (See what they had been once: "Ye endured a great fight," etc.) They had become vacillating, and ready to return to Judaism. A feeble and deteriorated piety was one reason for their dulness of hearing. That is natural. Christ's riches are spiritual, and can only be understood by spiritual perception. Let spiritual power decline, and ability to understand Divine truth declines with it. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;" "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." 2. *Intellectual prejudice.* They desired to return to Judaism; its ancient glories still fascinated them, and they were predisposed to accept any teaching aimed to show the untruth of Christianity. That was enough to account for their being dull of hearing. Scepticism is made, more than by anything else, by unwillingness to receive the truth. The mind that allows its personal desires to decide what is truth must become increasingly incapable of discerning truth when it is placed before it. Nothing more surely blinds than prejudice. 3. *Sinful inattention.* "Every one that partakes of milk [i.e. not able to partake of the solid food of Divine truth] is without experience [i.e. has not made himself acquainted by observation and study] of the Word of righteousness; . . . but solid food is for full-grown men, even those who," etc. That is, spiritual discernment, an apprehension of God's deep things, is the result of use. Inability to understand is the judgment on inattention. Scripture is a sealed book to the heart that neglects it.

III. THE NECESSITY FOR THE REMOVAL OF THESE HINDRANCES OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY IS TO BE ATTAINED. 1. *For Christ, as revealed in the Word, is spiritual nourishment.* The truth about Christ is "milk" and "strong meat." Christ is the essence of Scripture, and he is "the Bread of life." What nourishing food is to the body, therefore, the Word of God is to the Divine life in man. On participation on it that life depends. 2. *There is a distinction drawn here between those truths which merely sustain and those which increase life.* What is the "milk"? Those first necessary principles recorded in ch. vi. 1, 2. There we have the *essential* life-giving points (not quite such a "simple gospel" as some think!). The doctrines of repentance, faith, the Holy Spirit, Christian service, the resurrection, and the judgment,—these are the "milk." What is the "strong meat"? The deeper, fuller truths about Christ set forth here—his character, work, relation, grace, Son of God and Son of man, our Prophet, Priest, and King, with the height and depth, and length, and breadth of meaning all this involves. 3. *Christian maturity depends on the partaking of truth in these higher forms.* They ought to be "babes" no longer, but "strong men;" and how? "Let us cease to speak of the first," etc. The method by which this Epistle seeks to arouse a lukewarm and enfeebled Church to higher things is the presentation of these higher truths concerning the surpassing glory of the Son of God. "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge," etc.—C. N.

Vers. 1—3.—*The character and office of the Aaronic high priest foreshadows the higher glory of Jesus Christ.* As there had been given some counsels to pray for Divine help because our Lord is the Divine High Priest, the thought advances to show the true idea of a high priest under the Mosaic Law, that over against him may appear in his glory the character of him who was one after the order of Melchizedek. The ancient priest was taken from among men to minister in spiritual things, as others are appointed to manage temporal matters; and therefore Paul declares that the ruler is a minister of God to us for good. It was the office of the priest to present sacrifices for sins of ignorance, and those faults which arise from the weakness and inclinations of our nature. They were not offered for such daring and flagrant transgressions as were committed by David and Manasseh, who by faith and penitence sought and obtained pardon outside the ritual of the Jewish Law, and from the free and sovereign mercy of God. The sacrifices for ordinary faults were presented especially on the Day of Atonement, when the people bowed in penitence, and the errors of the past year were forgiven. The high priest himself needed the advantage of the atonement which was vouchsafed through the sacrifices which he offered for himself. To perform his office with success he must be, since he was beset with infirmity, tender-hearted without being indulgent to evil, and firm without being severe and unfeeling. He had to deal with men's souls in states of anxiety, and, knowing his own frailties, must be merciful towards others. Eli charged Hannah with intemperance when she was praying with fervour for a gift which God only could bestow, and thoughtlessly added affliction to affliction; but on her appeal he relented, and said, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant thee the petition thou hast asked of him" (1 Sam. i. 14—17). The appointment of the priest is a proof of the merciful interest of Jehovah in the spiritual condition of men, and his willingness to invite them to enter into blessed relations with himself.—B.

Vers. 4—6.—These verses show us *the honour of the priesthood.* Aaron was divinely called (Exod. xxviii. 1), and was endowed with gifts and qualifications for the office. It was an honour to approach unto God in the sacred uses of his ministry; "for blessed is the man whom thou choosest and causest to approach unto thee." He transacted the most important affairs for the people, and made reconciliation for them on the Day of Atonement. He revealed and interpreted the Divine will by Urim and Thummim, and his lips kept knowledge. He represented the people to Jehovah, and carried the names of the children of Israel on his breast and shoulders. He was set apart by the sacredness of his office from many of the cares and changes of human life, and was to lead a life of special consecration to the service of God. Our Lord undertook the work of a priest in a more glorious manner than was suggested by the most holy and distinguished minister of the ancient Law. All the aspects of honour and gracious service are exalted in him to an unimaginable degree. He is at the right hand of the Father. He officiates

for all nations, people, and tongues. He treats the successive generations of believers with constant love, and imparts Divine help in worship. He is the final and most glorious revelation of God to man. He exalts and enriches the life of his followers by the tenderness and sympathy of his nature, and inspires them with resolution to come boldly to the throne of grace.—B.

VER. 7—10.—Sacrificial sorrow. I. THERE IS HERE AN AFFECTING OUTLINE OF THE SACRIFICIAL SORROWS OF OUR LORD. Like the ancient psalmists, he bows in solemn and agonizing prayer, with profuse weeping, that the cup which was presented to him in Gethsemane might be removed from him. It was a bitter and brimming cup of indescribable distress. Scripture gives us the outward signs of the sorrow, and leaves the awful cause in solemn silence. This must have been from his standing in our place as Surety and Substitute. He was heard; and an angel from heaven appeared to strengthen him.

II. THERE IS THE CONTRAST BETWEEN HIS DIGNITY AS THE SON AND THE PROOF OF HIS OBEDIENCE. If we would understand the glory of his sonship, it is necessary to turn to the first chapter of the Epistle; yet he submitted, and learned, not by painful failure and unsuccessful attempts to obey his Father, but passed through the whole circle of teaching, working, enduring contradiction, until he could say, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work thou gavest me to do."

III. THE DIVINE PERFECTION AND ISSUES OF HIS OBEDIENCE. He passed through his Divine consecration, and received the approving voice of his Father, who raised him from the dead. From him can now flow eternal salvation, which begins here in redemption from guilt, the restraint of sin, the indwelling of the Spirit, freedom from the penal stroke of death, and the blessedness of eternal life. All this is connected with obedience on the part of believers, who, while they trust in his sacrifice, yield their life to his authority as the King of Zion. He was "called of God." The appointment is valid and unchangeable, and foreshadowed by the ministry and office of Melchizedek.—B.

VER. 11—14.—Dulness of spiritual perception. I. THERE IS A REPROOF FOR THESE BELIEVERS BECAUSE THEY CANNOT HEAR, AND THEREFORE CANNOT TEACH, THE TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL. They had become, through slackness [and yielding both to the attractions of the temple-worship and the opposition of their countrymen, unable to hear the weighty truths connected with Melchizedek, the illustrious type of Christ. To be dull of hearing the sweet sounds of joyous nature in spring, or to catch imperfectly the strains of sacred music, would be a loss; but how more serious is the loss of being unable to receive inspired communications respecting Jesus Christ, who is the Alpha and Omega of our faith and hope! The painful result was that they could not teach others, and "give a reason for the hope that was in them with meekness and fear." They must, therefore, go back to the Christian alphabet and learn their letters afresh, and begin again their course of discipleship. They needed some one who was advanced in the knowledge of the Saviour; but he need not be an apostle, a prophet, or an evangelist. Considering how much the diffusion of the gospel at that time depended upon the living voice, their inability to teach was a loss to themselves and many others.

II. THEY ARE REPROVED FOR THE NON-IMPROVEMENT OF LONG-CONTINUED PRIVILEGES. When for the "time," which word signifies a considerable period, during which they had had many who were pastors, and spoke the Word of God. They had had public worship, in which Christ was set forth evidently crucified before them. They had often been invited to the Lord's Supper, and had been reminded of his matchless fidelity to their interests, even when his holy soul encountered billows of distress, and deep called unto deep, and the awful sorrows of the cross darkened and crushed him. Miracles had been wrought; prophecies interpreted by their glorious fulfilment; and prayer and praise had diffused a hallowed influence. Notwithstanding the richness of the soil, the regularity of the rains, and the bright shining of the sun, the vineyard produced grapes which were small, acid, and unacceptable. And all these advantages, which were crowned by the willingness and love of the Divine Spirit to encourage and bless them, they were "dull of hearing and could not teach."

III. THE REPROOF AFFIRMS THE SERIOUS PERSONAL DISADVANTAGES OF NEGLECT. They are described as babes which need simple nourishment and must be fed with milk, which signifies the rudimentary truths of the gospel. As babes they are unskil-

ful, and cannot speak the Word of righteousness with distinct and powerful utterance; for he who would speak with power must do so from a full mind and a large experience. Such as these believers, who had so unprofitably used the time which had elapsed from their conversion, are only fit for the elementary truths of the gospel, and are consequently unacquainted with the vast and unsearchable treasures of strength laid up in Christ for the comfort and joy of his disciples. The perfect and full-grown men who use their senses and spiritual powers aright are privileged to "eat of fat things full of marrow, and drink wine on the lees well refined." The stronger they are, the more they can enjoy of the rich and solid comforts and supports of Divine grace; and are thereby fitted for the arduous work of professing the gospel, vindicating its claims, and illustrating its power.—B.

VER. 1—6.—*The qualifications and functions of the true priest.* I. **HE IS TAKEN FROM AMONG MEN.** It is not an angelic ministry. The true humanity of Jesus must ever be emphasized. A perfect man is needed to be the true priest, but he must be a man. And the reason of this is found in the kind of work he has to do. Especially in that part of it which concerns the sin offering. He has to act for those who, begirt with infirmity, are continually showing their ignorance, and continually wandering into forbidden paths. He should have imagination enough to enter measurably into the extent of their sin.

II. **HE IS TAKEN FROM AMONGST MEN BY DIVINE APPOINTMENT.** As to sacrifices, God gave through Moses general instructions, enough to secure the people from a blundering and slovenly presentation. And with respect to the priest, he might have pointed out certain qualifications and left the people to select. But that there might be no dispute as to fitness, he chose the man himself. And then the succession to the office went on as easy a process as any—that of natural descent. God only can choose, consecrate, and qualify the true priest.

III. **HE IS AN OFFERER OF GIFTS AND SACRIFICES FOR SIN.** He is the habitual channel through which man recognizes his double duty to God. Man has to present gifts to God; expressions of thanksgiving and signs of service; tokens that the harvest which man gathers is the result of Divine bounty as well as of human effort. And inasmuch as these gifts, material things, were not usable by God directly, they had to go to the use of his priests, away for ever from the common use of men. Then along with the gifts had to be sacrifices for sin, the recognition of how imperfect the very best gift must be. To make the gift without the sin offering was presumption; it argued a conceited satisfaction with what one had done. Nor must the sin offering be without the gift, on pretence that nothing could be given worthy of God's acceptance. That would have been adding sin to sin. We must give our best to God through Christ, however poor that best may be.—Y.

VER. 7—9.—*Gethsemane.* Here we have Gethsemane, apart from external circumstances—the treachery of Judas, the apathy, ignorance, and drowsiness of the disciples. The one thing of supreme importance is set before us, even the struggle and suffering in the heart of Jesus himself. Note—

I. **THE ELEMENTS OF THE SUFFERING.** 1. *The possession of a suffering nature.* This struggle happened in the days of his flesh. It was nothing wonderful that he should shrink from physical pain, especially when he knew it was to be such pain as of the scourging and the cross. 2. *The possession of a sinless nature.* To find a sinless human being shrinking with peculiar horror from death, accords with the great theological dictum that death is the result of sin. The right of Jesus could not be less than to pass from this world as Enoch did, by translation into glory. Death is the thing from which he shrinks. And full of life as Jesus was, life of the whole being, spiritual life most of all, how should he not shrink from death?

II. **INTENSITY OF THE SUFFERING.** This is shown by the urgency of the supplications. Jesus had had his times of intercession, his times for sweet remembrance of his disciples, and of a sinning, sorrowing world; but now here is a prayer out of keen personal agony—agony with an overpowering effect on the very thoughts and intents of the heart. Here in Gethsemane is the field of the Lord's supreme temptation. He who had raised others from the dead, it was not for him to submit to death without

clear proof that such was the will of his Father. We have to submit. We look on death as a constant possibility; in us there are no resources for warding it off or recovering us from its captivity, as there were in Jesus. Hence the considerations which would press on him, "Can it be right that I should die? Shall I let myself sink into the hands of this approaching band, and finally into the grasp of Pilate, to become passive and yielding in everything save spiritual integrity?" What wonder was it that in such a struggle of the heart he should sweat as it were great drops of blood!

III. SUCCESSFUL ENDURANCE OF THE SUFFERING. Jesus goes into this struggle of Gethsemane with one great practical truth in his heart, viz. that his Father's will was the supreme determining guide of his course. To adopt a subsequent metaphor of the Epistle, this was his anchor within the veil. That will, his guide hitherto, had led him to Gethsemane, had led him into the very midst of plots and treacheries, into a thick circle of the wicked, each with his own special interest, and yet all wonderfully combined in bringing Jesus to the cross. This great truth, that he was in the midst of these things by God's will, kept Jesus as on the rock in the great hour of his temptation. There was more to be done for God's glory and the world's good through death, than through mere continuance of life. A dying Jesus is infinitely more than a translated Enoch.

IV. RESULT OF THE SUFFERING. His obedience becomes the measure of obedience to others; and also their inspiration—the thing that prompts ever to ask inquiringly, earnestly, with singleness of heart, as to what the will of God is. To the right-hearted God ever gives an infallible intimation; and before such ever stands also the figure of their perfected Leader. By the will of God he went to the cross, yielded to death; and then came the ascension, the passing within the veil, the entrance on the functions of the true High Priest. And so he became the cause of eternal salvation—eternal as distinguished from temporal. To Lazarus he had once been the cause of temporal salvation; but Lazarus would die again, and needed, through faith and obedience, eternal salvation. That is the salvation which transcends death. Death may get mixed up with the process, may for a time even conceal, or at least dim, the reality; but in due course death is left behind, and eternal salvation shines forth in all its Divine glory.—Y.

Vers. 11, 12.—*A special hindrance to Christian truth.* We have here—

I. A LARGE TOPIC. Much had to be said in the times of old concerning the scope of the priesthood. Many instructions had to be given as to various offerings and various seasons. And not one of them was without some reference to the higher and abiding priesthood of Jesus. As the writer of the Epistle thought of all the tabernacle furniture of the holy of holies—ark, mercy-seat, lamps, table of shewbread, altar of burnt offering, priestly garments, ephod, breastplate, Urim and Thummim—and considered how all these things shadowed forth some office, some relation, of Jesus, what wonder that he should try to stir up the languid intellect of his readers by announcing how much had to be said! *Multum in parvo*, it is true, but still *multum*. And we have to rejoice that as much has to be said, so in the New Testament much is said. No time is spent over useless knowledge and speculation, things conjectural, things to please; everything is bent to setting forth the large needs of man and the comprehensive fulness of Christ.

II. A SPECIAL DIFFICULTY IN DEALING WITH THE TOPIC. Those who are addressed will not give proper attention. We are reminded of the words of Jesus, "He that hath ears . . . let him hear." Progress in the apprehension of Christian truth, true progress in theology, depends on our own disposition. Great attainments in human sciences are not for all, or even for many. They demand a certain degree of intellectual power, a certain amount of leisure, and perhaps other facilities; so that it is quite certain all men cannot be learned any more than all can be rich. But God has made progress in Christian truth to depend on the state of the heart. He has ordered things so that those who are babes in this world's knowledge may be as giants in the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned; and if God has given his Holy Spirit that we may be led into all the truth, and if nevertheless we stumble among misapprehensions, then assuredly we are to blame, and especially will blame fall upon us when the element of time is brought into consideration. Here were people who had had gospel truth a long time before them, and yet knew little more than the

alphabet. Still learners when they ought to be teachers! What worse reproach could there be—seeing how much spiritual ignorance there is in the world, and how much error, and how many there are busy in misleading men? Nor must we omit to notice how this gentle yet searching rebuke of the writer here shows his own advanced attainments. He is writing of things which he well understands, and knows what he means. His topics are not mere trifles. They are very practical, and point forward into the developments and occupations of the future.—Y.

Vers. 12—14.—*The powers of the full-grown Christian.* Here is the close analogy between the natural life and the spiritual.

I. THE PROGRESS OF THE NATURAL LIFE. At birth the babe finds food provided for it, without effort, without thought—food exactly suited to its infantile state, and which it makes use of by a kind of instinct. Nothing is expected from it save that which it is certain to do by a law of its nature. But this season, when nothing is expected from it, is only a season of preparing for the day when much will be expected. Nature will not always provide food in this easy, simple fashion. Milk has to make the way for solid food, and, what is even more important, food to be chosen by us. Whenever we are fit to choose, God leaves us to choose, not between the pleasant and the unpleasant, not between that which appeals most powerfully to the taste, and that which is plainer, simpler fare; but, as the writer here emphatically puts it, between the good and the bad. That is the great matter to decide in the choice of food—Is it good or bad? Will it minister to growth, health, energy of function, fulness of life, length of days? God leaves us to settle this. He gives us, without our choice, a suitable food up to the time when our perceptions are sufficiently trained to choose for ourselves. Then he leaves us to freedom and responsibility.

II. THE SIMILAR PROGRESS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE. There is the new creature in Christ Jesus, born again, beginning in feebleness, alive to new and heavenly things, and yet hardly knowing for a while what that life is. Needing to be treated with great long-suffering and consideration because of infirmity (1 Cor. iii. 2). But, as in the natural man, there should be growth, development of spiritual perception and grasp, so that the spiritual man may come to discern the difference between the true and the false, the fleshly and the spiritual, the abiding and the temporary, the earthly and the heavenly. Jesus Christ is the Bread of life. Recollect his own words, all important in the present connection: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." How many, spiritually considered, are monstrosities to what they ought to be! The natural man, nourished by proper food, full of life, growing and connecting itself with a thousand things around, while the new creature in Christ Jesus within is but a starved and pining babe. There may, perhaps, be much talk of living a life of faith on the Son of God, but no reality.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VI.

Vers. 1, 2.—Wherefore (since it is so incumbent on us to advance out of the state of milk-fed infants), leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us press on unto perfection (*τελειώματα*, continuing the image of maturity). The proper translation of *τὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον* is doubtful, the question being whether *τῆς ἀρχῆς* is to be connected with *λόγον* as an adjective genitive (so taken, as above, in the A.V.; cf. ch. v. 12, *στοιχείᾳ τῆς ἀρχῆς*), or with *τοῦ Χριστοῦ*, the word of the beginning of Christ, meaning discourse concerning the first principles of Christianity. "*Initium Christi*, scil. apud

discentes Christum, sæpe quippe Christus dicitur Paulo per metonymiam concreti pro *Christianismo*" (Bengel). A further question is whether the writer merely expresses his own intention of proceeding at once in this Epistle to the more advanced doctrine, or whether he is exhorting his readers to make spiritual progress, using the first person plural, *φερώμεθα* (as in ch. ii. 1 and iv. 1, *φωβήθωμεν*) out of sympathetic courtesy. The correspondence of this delicate form of exhortation with that of the earlier passages, the very words *φερώμεθα*, "let us be borne on," "press forward" (implying more than mere passing to a new line of thought), and *τελειώματα* (which expresses personal maturity, not

advanced subject of discourse), as well as the earnest warnings that follow against falling back, seem to necessitate the second of the above views of the meaning of this verse. The writer has, indeed, in his mind his intention of proceeding at once to the perfect doctrine; for he hopes that what he thus exhorts them to do they will do, so as to be able to follow him; but exhortation, rather than his own intention, is surely what the verse expresses. Not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. What was meant by τὰ στοιχία, etc., and τὸν τοῦ ἀρχῆς, etc., is here specified under the new image of a foundation on which a superstructure should be raised (cf. for the same figure, 1 Cor. iii. 11, a further instance of Pauline modes of thought). Of course no disparagement of the importance of this foundation is implied: it is necessary for the superstructure: it has in itself the elements of the superstructure, which rises from it in the way of growth. What is meant is, "With us this foundation has been already laid; I will not suppose any need for laying it anew: let us, then, go on to contemplate and understand the building that rests on and rises from it." The fundamentals enumerated are six—two essential principles of the religious life, and four heads of doctrine; for the word στοιχίς rules βαπτισμῶν and the three succeeding genitives, but not μετενοίας and νέμεως which precede. These are the fundamentals, or first principles, of Christianity; but (as has been intimated) so defined as to express no more, by the language used, than what even enlightened Jews might accept and understand. Fully understood, they carry the Christian superstructure; but they are such as a "babe" in Christ might rest content with, without seeing their ultimate bearing. The principles first mentioned are repentance and faith, the requisite qualifications for baptism, the essence of John the Baptist's teaching, and announced by Christ at the commencement of his ministry as the first steps into his kingdom: "The kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark i. 15; cf. also Acts xx. 21). By the dead works, from which repentance is to be, the Fathers generally understand simply sinful works, which may be so called because of sin being a state of spiritual death, and having death for its wages (cf. "dead in trespasses and sins," Eph. ii. 1), or as being in themselves barren and fruitless (cf. τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς ἀδόξοις τοῦ σκότους, Eph. v. 11). In an enumeration of elementary principles like this, the allusion, supposed by some commentators, to the deadness

of "the works of the Law," as set forth by St. Paul, is not likely to have been intended. The faith spoken of is not faith in Christ, but simply "faith towards God," which is, of course, the foundation and necessary preliminary of Christian faith. The reason for the expression is to be found in the writer's intention to specify only the first principles of the gospel, in which the Christian was still on common ground with the Jew (cf. John xiv. 1, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me"). The four fundamental doctrines follow. (1) Of baptisms. Observe, the word is not βάπτισμα, invariably used elsewhere for Christian baptism, but βαπτισμῶν, and that in the plural, βαπτισμῶν. In other passages βαπτισμῶν denotes the various lustrations practised by the Jews—"washings of pots and cups" (Mark vii. 8); "divers washings" (ch. ix. 10). Hence we may suppose these to be included in the general idea, and also the Jewish baptism of proselytes. On the other hand, the elementary doctrines of the gospel being here spoken of, there can be no doubt that the doctrine of Christian baptism is in the writer's view, but only with regard to the first simple conception of its meaning, which it had in common with other symbolical washings, the significance of which was understood by enlightened Jews (cf. John iii. 10, "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?"). (2) The doctrine of laying on of hands. This also was a Jewish rite, understood as signifying the bestowal of blessing and of power from above (cf. Gen. xlviii. 14; Dent. xxiv. 9; Mark x. 13), and was, as well as baptism, adopted into the Christian Church, acquiring there a new potency. The apostles practised it for conferring the gifts of the Spirit after baptism (Acts viii. 17; xix. 6), for ordination (Acts vi. 6; xiii. 3; 1 Tim. iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 6), and also for reconciling penitents (1 Tim. v. 22), and for healing (Mark xvi. 18; Acts xxviii. 8). Mentioned here immediately after "the doctrine of baptisms," and in an enumeration of elements in which all Christians were concerned, we can hardly fail to understand special reference to the imposition of hands after baptism, i.e. to confirmation. The two remaining doctrines of (3) the resurrection of the dead, and (4) eternal judgment, were also understood and generally accepted by enlightened Jews, and at the same time are necessary to be mentioned for a complete account of the foundations of the Christian faith. These foundations are, as has been seen—repentance and faith (qualifying for admission into the Church), and then the doctrine of remission of sins (expressed and conveyed by baptism), of enabling grace (expressed and conveyed by confirmation), of the life hereafter, and of final judgment. Of these

an elementary conception was level to even babes in Christ, fresh from Jewish training; fully understood, they form the basis of the whole structure of the highest Christian doctrine. It is obvious from the purport of the passage why neither the historical articles of the creed in which Christians were instructed (see 1 Cor. xv. 1—8; 1 Tim. iii. 16), nor the doctrine of the Eucharist (which belonged to the more advanced teaching), are included in this enumeration of the στοιχεῖα.

Ver. 3.—And this will we do (al. *let us do*; ποιήσωμεν, A, C, D, La*) if God permit; i.e. press on to perfection, as aforesaid, if only (as we firmly hope and trust, see ver. 6, etc.) you are still in a state in which God will permit advance; for (as is set forth in the following verses) there may be a retrogression from which recovery is impossible.

Vers. 4—6.—For it is impossible for those who have been once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, and have fallen away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. It is not, of course, implied that the Hebrew Christians had fallen into the condition thus described, or were near it; only that such a condition might be, and that, if they went back instead of advancing, they might arrive at it. The process intimated is that of complete apostasy from the faith after real conscious enjoyment of the gifts of grace. In such a case the hopelessness of the fall is in proportion to the privileges once enjoyed. This is the drift of the passage, though other views have been taken of its meaning, which will be noticed below. "Once enlightened" denotes the first apprehension of the light, which could be but once; when those that saw not began to see (John v. 39); when the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ shone once for all upon believers (2 Cor. iv. 4); when (according to the cognate passage, ch. x. 26; cf. ch. x. 32) they received the knowledge of the truth. The verb φωτίσω means in the LXX. "to enlighten by instruction," and was in common use in the early Church to express the enlightenment that accompanied baptism; whence baptism itself was called φωτισμός. Thus Justin Martyr ('Apol.' i. 62) says, καλεῖται δὲ τοῦτο τὸ λεγόμενον φωτισμός, ὡς φωτισζομένων τὴν διάνοιαν τῶν ταῦτα μαθησάντων. Cf. the title of Chrysostom's 'Hom.' xlix., Πρὸς τοὺς μέλλοντας φωτίζεσθαι. Since the expression was thus commonly used as early as Justin Martyr, there may probably be in the text a special reference to baptism as the occasion of the enlightenment. But, if so, more is meant by the phrase than

"those who have been once baptized;" an inward spiritual illumination is plainly pointed to; and it would not have been said of Simon Magus that he had been "once enlightened" in the sense intended. And this is indeed the real meaning of φωτισμός as applied to baptism by Justin Martyr, as his explanation, above quoted, shows. So also Chrysostom ('Hom.' cxvi.), "The heretics have baptism, but not enlightenment (φωτισμός); they are baptized indeed as to the body, but in the soul they are not enlightened; as also Simon was baptized, but was not enlightened." This consideration is important in view of one misapplication of the passage before us, which will be noticed below. But, further, those whom it is impossible to renew unto repentance are supposed not only to have been enlightened, but also to have "tasted of the heavenly gift" the emphatic word here being apparently γεύσασθαι: they have had experience as well as knowledge (cf. Ps. xxxiv. 8, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good;" and 1 Pet. ii. 3, "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious"). The word "gift" (δωρεά) is elsewhere used both for that of redemption generally (Rom. v. 15—17), and especially, and most frequently, for the gift of the Holy Ghost (cf. 2 Cor. ix. 15, "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable Gift"). They have become also partakers of the Holy Ghost, not merely been within the range of his influence, but actually shared it; and tasted (the same word as before, and with the same meaning, though here followed by an accusative) what is further spoken of. The expression ῥήματα occurs, Josh. xxi. 45; xxiii. 15; Zech. i. 13, for gracious Divine utterances. The idea of the Word of God being what is "tasted" may be suggested by Deut. viii. 3, quoted by our Lord in Matt. iv. 4, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." By the powers (δυνάμεις) are to be especially understood (as in ch. ii. 4 and elsewhere in the New Testament) the extraordinary ones in which the gift of the Holy Ghost was manifested, the χαρίσματα of the apostolic Church. But why said here to be μέλλοντας αἰῶνες? For the meaning of this expression, see under ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων (ch. i. 1), and αἰκουμένην τὴν μέλλουσαν (ch. ii. 5). It denotes the predicted age of the Messiah's triumph. And if (as has appeared most probable, and as μέλλοντας here seems evidently to imply) that age was regarded as still future, not properly beginning till the second advent, still the "powers" spoken of are of it, being earnest and foretastes of a new order of things (cf. Eph. i. 14, where the "Holy Spirit of promise" is called "the earnest of our inheritance;" also 2 Cor. i. 22; v. 5).

There are other passages in which Christians are regarded as already in the dawn of the future daybreak, and irradiated by the coming glory. The *falling away* (*ὑπαπόστροφος*) after such enlightenment and such experience means (as aforesaid) total apostasy from the faith. This appears from the expressions that follow, and still more from those in the cognate passage, ch. x. 26—31. "Non *relapsos* modo dicit in pristina, sed nova perniciē *præterlapsos a toto statu illo laetissimo, simulque a fide, spe, et amore*" (Bengel). Such an utter apostasy was possible to Hebrews oscillating between Church and synagogue: they might be so drawn at last into the atmosphere of the latter as, with the unbelieving Jews, to reject with contumely, and so to themselves recrucify, the Son of God. The force of "to themselves" is illustrated by Gal. vi. 14, where St. Paul says that he so glories in the cross of Christ that through Christ the world is crucified to him, and he to the world; i.e. all fellowship between him and the world is broken off. So here the *ἑαυτοῖς* implies the breaking off of all fellowship with what a man is said to crucify. "They crucify again the Son of God," repeating what their fathers had done formerly when they gave him over to the death of the cross; and this, he it observed, still more culpably, since it is after personal experience proving him to be "the Son of God." And they not only make him as one dead to themselves: they also expose him (*ὑπαδειγματοποιήσαντες*: cf. Numb. xxv. 4, LXX.) to the reproach and mockery of the world. "Ostentantes, scil. aliis" (Bengel). The above explanation is adopted from Delitzsch. Be it observed next what is said of those who do this—not that no repentance can henceforth avail them, but that even *unto repentance* it is impossible to renew them. Such falling away after such experience precludes the possibility of repentance. On such persons the powers of grace have been exhausted. It is not in the nature of things that they should return to Christ, or see the things that belong unto their peace any more. The correspondence between the state here described and the consequence of the "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost" (Matt. xii. 31; Mark iii. 28; Luke xii. 10) suggests itself at once; our Lord's words, in speaking of that unpardonable sin, being rightly supposed to point to obduracy in spite of experience of the Holy Spirit's power. Especially obvious is the correspondence with St. Luke's account of the Saviour's warning—one of the not unfrequent instances of resemblance between our Epistle and the writings of that evangelist. For St. Luke records the saying as spoken, not to the Jews on the occasion of their attributing Christ's works to Beelze-

bub, but to the disciples themselves, after a warning to them against "the leaven of the Pharisees," and against being moved by the fear of men, and immediately after the words, "He that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." Compare also the "sin unto death" spoken of by St. John (1 John v. 16). Misconceptions of the drift of this passage, once prevalent, or possible, remain to be noticed. (1) It has been from early times a main support of the strict Church discipline according to which deadly sin committed after baptism precludes re-admission to Church communion. It was so cited by Tertullian as early as the second century ('De Pudicitia,' c. 20), and in the third used to justify the Novatians in their refusal of communion, even after penance, to the *lapsi*. The passage, as above explained, was really irrelevant, since it refers, not to the treatment by the Church of penitents, but to the impossibility of some persons being brought to penitence at all. (2) The Catholic Fathers, rightly rejecting the Novatian position, generally understood the text as forbidding the iteration of baptism; thus turning it against the Novatians, who rebaptized those who joined their communion. So Ambrose, Theodoret, and others. But, though their position on this subject was in itself sound, the passage, as above explained, is as irrelevant to it as to that of the Novatians. (3) This, and the other texts referred to in connection with it, have led some Christians to despair of salvation, however anxious for it, under the idea that they had themselves committed the unpardonable sin. This desperate view goes beyond that of the Novatians, who only precluded from Church communion, not of necessity from the mercies of God (Socrates, 'Hist. Eccl.,' iv. 21). But the very state of mind of those who entertain such fears is a sign that they are not of those to whom this text applies. They cannot have entirely fallen from grace, if they have the grace to repent and long for pardon. (4) Calvin's predestinarian views compelled him and his followers to do violence to the plain meaning of the passage. Holding the doctrine of the *indestructibility* of grace, which involved (a) that one really regenerate cannot fall away, and (b) that consequently one who falls away cannot have been really regenerate, he had to explain away the clauses descriptive of the grace enjoyed, as meaning only a superficial experience of it. With this view he laid stress on the word *ὑποκατάστασις* as meaning "summis labris gustare." Only dogmatic prejudice could have suggested such a sense of the word as intended in this place, any more than in ch. ii. 9, where it is plainly inadmissible. Nor can an impartial reader fail to see in the whole accumulation

of pregnant clauses an intention of expressing the very reverse of a mere apparent and delusive experience of saving grace. The depth of the experience is, in fact, a measure of the hopelessness of the fall. Art. XVI. of the English Church is a protest against all the erroneous conclusions above specified.

Vers. 7, 8.—For land which hath drunk in the oft-coming rain upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them for whom (not, as in A.V., “by whom”) it is also tilled, receiveth blessing from God; but if it beareth thorns and thistles (not, as in A.V., “that which beareth”), it is rejected, and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned (literally, *for burning*; cf. Isa. xlv. 15, *ἡ γὰρ ἀσθράκωσις ἐστὶ καύσω*). The illustration is apt and close. Observe that the “land which hath drunk,” etc., is the subject in ver. 8, as well as of ver. 7, as is shown by the absence of an article before *ἐκφέρουσα*. Hence the unproductive as well as the fruitful soil is supposed to have received, and not only received but imbibed also, abundant supplies of rain. Its failure is its own fault, and it is regarded as responsible for it, and deserving of its final fate. This exactly illustrates the case of those who “fall away” after not only receiving abundantly, but also taking in so as to be filled with the “gracious rain” of the Holy Spirit. The only difference is that in their case, free-will being a constituent of their productive power, the responsibility figuratively attributed to the land is real (cf. *ἡκούσιος ἀμαρτανόητων*, ch. x. 26). For similar illustrations drawn from unproductiveness in nature in spite of culture, cf. Isa. v. 4 and Luke xxviii. 23. The “blessing from God” refers to the view, pervading the Old Testament, of fruitfulness being the result and sign of the Divine blessing on the land (cf. Gen. xxvii. 27, “The smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed”). And it is further implied that incipient fruitfulness is rewarded by more abundant blessing, according to our Lord’s words, Matt. xiii. 12, “Whosoever hath, to him shall be given,” and John xv. 2, “Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” The “thorns and thistles,” connected with a curse on the ground, seem suggested by Gen. iii. 17, 18, *Ἐπικατάρατος ὁ γῆ ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις σου. . . ἀκάνθας καὶ τριβύλους ἀνατελεῖ σοι*. LXX. (cf. “Cursed shall be the fruit of thy land,” Deut. xxviii. 18). It is to be observed, further, that the land, though bearing thorns instead of fruit, is not spoken of as yet under the final curse, but only nigh unto it, so as to avoid even a remote suggestion that the Hebrew Christians had actually reached the hopeless state. But, unless fruitfulness should ensue, they are warned of the inevitable end by the fate of thorns and

thistles, which is, not to be garnered, but to be burnt (cf. 2 Sam. xxiii. 6, “The sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, . . . and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place;” cf. also Deut. xxix. 23, “The whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth thereon”—a state of final hopeless barrenness).

Ver. 9.—But, beloved, we are persuaded, etc. Here, as in ch. iv. 14, warning is succeeded by words of encouragement and hope. The reason for not only a hope, but even a persuasion, that God will keep them from apostasy, is given in the following verse.

Ver. 10.—For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love (*τοῦ κέρον* in the Textus Receptus is ill supported, having, perhaps, been interpolated from 1 Thess. i. 3) which ye showed towards his Name, in that ye ministered to the saints, and do minister. It appears that the Hebrew Christians had formerly (some especial occasion being probably referred to) been active in their charity towards fellow-Christians in distress, and that such charity had not ceased. On this is grounded the persuasion that they will be kept steadfast in the faith. Those who had so shown their faith by their works would surely not be allowed to lose it. The very idea of the Divine justice implies that the use of grace, thus evidenced, will be rewarded by continuance of grace. Cf. Phil. i. 6, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perfect it (*ἐπιτελέσει*) until the day of Jesus Christ;” where also there is reference to deeds of charity, shown in the case of the Philippian by their sympathy with the apostle in his bonds, which charity he prays may “abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all discernment.” No difficulty need be felt in this reference to God’s justice, as though it involved the doctrine of human merit, *de congruo* or *de condigno*, claiming reward as of debt. The simple and obvious view, that God, in virtue of his justice, will be most gracious to those who have used his grace, by no means contravenes the doctrine of all grace being the free gift of his bounty (cf. 1 John i. 9; Rom. ii. 6, etc.). Observe, too, as bearing on the idea of this passage, how the will to do the will of God is said by our Lord to be followed by knowledge of the doctrine (John vii. 17), and how works of charity are the very tests of the final judgment (Matt. xxv. 31, etc.).

Ver. 11.—But (however hopeful may be your charity, still more is needed) we desire (*ἐπιθυμοῦμεν*—expressing earnest desire—*οὐκ ἐπε θέλω, ἀλλ’ ὁ πατριᾶς ἦν φιλοστοργίας καὶ πλεον τοῦ θέλω, ἐπιθυμοῦμεν*, Chrysostom) that every one of you (all of you without ex-

ception) do show the same diligence unto the full assurance (or simply *fulness*; for the meaning of *πληροφορία*, cf. ch. x. 22; 1 Thess. i. 5; Col. ii. 2) of hope even to the end (i.e. evince the same diligence in this regard as you have already shown in your works of charity: "*eandem* in spe et fide quam in amore," Bengel).

Ver. 12.—That ye become not slothful (*νῆθροί*, the same word as was used in ch. v. 11, *νῆθροί* τὰς ἀκοαίς. There, with regard to intelligence, they were accused of having already become so; here, where a hopeful view is taken of their prospects, the writer delicately avoids implying that they were so yet in regard to their desire of making progress), but followers (i.e. following the example—surely a better English word than *imitators*) of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. The present participle *κληρονομούμενων* does not confine the sense of the expression to those who are *now* so inheriting. Abraham being presently adduced as an example, it refers to all who at any time so inherit, equivalent to, "the inheritors of." The drift is—Faith and patience are ever required in order that the Divine promises, however assured, may be inherited: these qualifications (in opposition to your being *νῆθροί*) are what you want for securing your own inheritance.

Vers. 13—15.—For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, having patiently endured, he obtained the promise. Abraham—the ancestor of the Hebrews, the first recipient of the promises, the father of the faithful—is now appropriately adduced as an example. He (Gen. xxii. 16), as is the case with you (Pa. cx.), was assured of his inheritance by the Divine oath; and so he obtained it, but only through "faith and patience." You have the like assurance, but attended with the like conditions. And then this Divine oath, the significance of which is set forth in vers. 16—18, is made a link of connection between the hortatory section (ch. v. 11—vi. 20) and the coming argument about Melchizedek. This is one instance of the artistic way in which, throughout the Epistle, the interposed hortatory passages are so turned as to connect the divided sections of the argument. But what is said about Abraham (vers. 13, 14, 15) has been variously understood. It is connected with ver. 12 thus: "Be ye followers of them who inherit the promises through faith and patience: for God, in his promise to Abraham, swore by himself in confirmation of it; and so (καὶ οὕτως) through patience he obtained the promise. Be it here observed that *μακροθυμήσας* in ver. 15

("having patiently endured," A.V.) corresponds with *διὰ μακροθυμίας* in ver. 12, and expresses essentially the same idea. The aorist participle *μακροθυμήσας* does not in itself imply that the patience was previous to the obtaining; it expresses only that by patiently enduring he obtained. Observe also that *καὶ οὕτως* (cf. Acts vii. 8; xxvii. 44; xxviii. 14) denotes the *consequence* from what has been previously stated; i.e. that *μακροθυμήσας ἐπέτυχε* followed from the Divine oath ensuring the fulfilment of the promise. Both his eventually obtaining and his patience in awaiting fulfilment were in consequence of the assuring oath. But then how and when did Abraham himself obtain the promise? Not even the temporal fulfilment in the multiplication of his seed and the inheritance of the promised land, much less the spiritual fulfilment in Christ, was during his own life. Both he could but see "afar off." In respect to the latter it is expressly said (ch. xi. 13, 39) that the patriarchs did *not* receive the promises—*μὴ λαβόντες τὰς ἐπαγγελίας: οὐκ ἐκοιμίσαντο τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν*. What, then, is meant by *μακροθυμήσας ἐπέτυχε*? Bleek understands the time of the oath (Gen. xxii.), when the promise was irrevocably assured, to have been the time of obtaining. But more than this is suggested by the phrase, *ἐπέτυχε τῇ ἐπαγγελίᾳ* (cf. ch. xi. 33), as well as by *καὶ οὕτως*, viz. the actual attainment of the blessing assured to him by oath. There are two other ways of explaining: (1) to identify Abraham with his seed, in whom, though not in his own person, he may be conceived to have obtained,—of which view it may be significant that *πληθυνῶ τὸ σπέρμα σου* of the LXX. (Gen. xxii. 17) is changed in the Epistle to *πληθυνῶ σε*: (2) to regard Abraham, still alive in the unseen world, as himself enjoying the fulfilment of the ancient promise. So Delitzsch, who, dwelling on the thought that nothing less than the blessing of Abraham extended to the whole world (cf. *κληρονόμος τοῦ κόσμου*, Rom. iv. 13) can be regarded as complete fulfilment, says, "God's oath-sealed word of promise is now fulfilled in Christ, and Abraham, while living on in the unseen world, is conscious of and enjoys that fulfilment, and so may be said to have 'obtained the promise.'" This view derives some support from ch. 11, 13—16, where the longings of the pilgrim patriarchs is so beautifully represented as reaching to a heavenly fulfilment. On the other hand, the aorist *ἐπέτυχε* is against it, and hence view (1) may be accepted as a sufficient explanation of the expression (see below, or ch. xi. 39). With regard to the general drift, it is obvious how *μακροθυμία*, as well as *πίστις*, in respect to the promise first made to him "in Char-

ran" is strikingly displayed in Abraham's recorded life.

Vers. 16—20.—For men swear by the greater: and of every dispute of theirs (literally, to them), the oath is final (literally, an end) for confirmation (*eisβεβαίωσεν* being connected with *πέρας*, not, as in the A.V., with *ἔρκος*). Here begins the explanation of the meaning and purpose of the Divine oath, already cursorily touched on in ver. 18. God thus, for full assurance, condescends to the form of confirmation most binding among men when they promise to each other. They appeal to one greater than themselves to intervene between them. He, having no one greater than himself to appeal to, appeals (so to speak) to his own immutability, and thus may be said to *intervene* with an oath (*ἐμαρτύρεται ὅρκῳ* (ver. 17), the verb being neuter, with the sense of "mediate" or "intervene," not, as in A.V., "confirmed it"). The reason is not that the Divine promise is not in itself enough, but that God, willing to show more abundantly to the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, is pleased to grant them this additional confirmation; that by two immutable things (first the promise, in itself sufficient; and secondly the oath, for more abundant assurance), in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong consolation (*παράκλησις*, bearing elsewhere this sense, and also that of *exhortation*, as in ch. xii. 5; xiii. 22; which latter sense is understood here by most commentators as uniting best the drift of the passage with the general notion of encouragement) who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us. The course of thought has now passed again from Abraham to Christians, the transition having been prepared for by the general expression, τοῖς κληροδόμοις τῆς διαγγελίας in ver. 17. Indeed, the oath to him was an assurance to us also, we being the final inheritors of the promised blessing. Then finally, in the two concluding verses, the subject to be treated in ch. vii. is again beautifully led up to by a natural sequence of thought: Whither (*sc.* hope) we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and entering into that which is within the veil; whither as a Forerunner Jesus en-

tered for us, become a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. Our hope (*ἐλπίς*), regarded in ver. 18 objectively, assumes here a subjective sense: it is our anchor cast upwards beyond the heavens through which our Forerunner has passed (cf. ch. iv. 14, διελθὼν τοὺς οὐρανούς), and, in virtue of the promise and the oath, fixed there secure and firm. "That which is within the veil" (*κατακρυφίως*, the word invariably denoting the veil in the temple, is the heavenly holy of holies, of which the earthly was symbolical, as is fully set forth in ch. viii. This first mention of the veil is an instance of the manner in which, throughout this Epistle, ideas to be afterwards expanded are often intimated by way of preparation beforehand.

Instructive in this chapter is the view presented of Divine purpose in relation to human will. The Divine purpose may have been evinced by supplies of grace so abundant as to remove all doubt of the possibility of success; yet through the human will there may be failure: the very Divine oath may have ensured fulfilment of the promise; yet, as to Abraham, so to individual Christians, faith and patience are the conditions of fulfilment. It is evident that the Divine purpose and the Divine promise are all along referred to, not to dishearten any for fear that they may not be included in them, not to encourage remissness in any on the ground of certainty of attainment, not so as to suggest any idea of arbitrary selection irrespective of desert, but simply to incite to perseverance on the ground of assurance of success, if the human conditions are fulfilled. And this is the practical application of the doctrine of predestination found also elsewhere in St. Paul's Epistles (cf. Rom. viii. 28—39). Predestination and free-will may be to human reason theoretically irreconcilable, though reason, as well as theology, may compel us to acknowledge both. The problem may properly be left unsolved, as among the many deep things of God. But it is of importance to observe how the doctrine of predestination is practically applied in Scripture as bearing upon human conduct.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—8.—*No standing still in religion.* This thought underlies the whole passage. To pass into God's kingdom means to move with it. It is impossible to maintain a halt in the Christian life; to stand still is to fall away.

I. THE DUTY OF PRESSING ON UNTO PERFECTION. (Vers. 1—3.) This perfection is twofold: (1) maturity in religious knowledge, as a means; (2) full development of spiritual life, as the end. It is sinful to remain only a babe in Christ, and to have no wish to grow. Note, that to "leave the first principles" does not mean to abandon

them. Rather, we are to leave them as a tree leaves its root, and yet never lets it go; as a full-grown man leaves slops for solid food, and yet does not abjure the use of milk; as a building leaves its "foundation" (ver. 1), and yet rests its whole weight upon it. When the foundation-principles are once securely laid, that work should be regarded as settled and done with; what remains is, to proceed with the superstructure. The apostle instances, in vers. 1 and 2, a few of the elementary principles, connecting them together in couples. 1. *Two inward experiences.* (Ver. 1.) Repentance and faith, being indispensable to the very beginning of the life of piety, occupy a primary place among the foundation-doctrines of Christianity. 2. *Two outward ceremonies.* (Ver. 2.) Rites and forms are merely the external framework of religion. Advanced piety uses them only as means and helps to spirituality. 3. *Two future events.* (Ver. 2.) The doctrines of the resurrection and of the judgment, with its eternal issues, are rudimentary doctrines; because the idea of responsibility to the Supreme is one of the simplest conceptions connected with religion. Of such elements as these six was "the simple gospel" composed in the apostolic age. If to our minds these clauses savour of "strong meat" rather than of "milk," is not that an indication that Christians in these times are troubled with weak digestion? We need grace to appreciate the apostle's admonition (ver. 1) and to realize the hope which he expresses (ver. 3).

II. THE DANGER OF SHRINKING BACK UNTO PERDITION. (Vers. 4—8.) These verses drop from the apostle's pen like live thunderbolts. There is a solemnity in them which it is impossible to exaggerate. This passage is confessedly difficult—to all, at least, who accept the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. As we believe, however, that this doctrine is very clearly taught in Scripture, both by our Lord and his apostles, the declension here referred to must be that of professed believers who were never true believers. Notice, then: 1. *The lofty privileges which apostates may enjoy.* (Vers. 4, 5.) An unrenewed man may be well instructed in the doctrines of grace, may enjoy the study of saving truth, may experience the operations of the Spirit, may be filled with the happiness which the gospel brings (Matt. xiii. 20), and may even obtain glimpses of the eternal glory. But these attainments will avail him nothing so long as he remains unrenewed. That faith is spurious and ephemeral which is based only upon the moral evidence of the truth, and which is not connected with genuine conversion to God. 2. *The aggravated wickedness which apostates may commit.* (Ver. 6.) They may "fall away" finally and irretrievably. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Sooner or later the unfruitful field will be covered with a harvest of "thorns and thistles" (ver. 8). False professors may abandon the gospel to return to Judaism, or to plunge into atheism, or to sink into immorality, or to degenerate into worldliness. And in the bitterness of their malice against the cross in which they once professed to glory, such persons take rank with the long succession of those who in their lives repeat spiritually the dreadful crime of Calvary. 3. *The fearful destruction into which apostates may fall.* (Vers. 6, 8.) Deliberate apostasy from Christ, on the part of one who has known him intimately, destroys by a natural law the very capacity for repentance and spiritual life. Confirmed impenitence extinguishes the eyes of the soul, and makes the heart "past feeling." High-handed, malicious resistance of the Holy Spirit, culminating in outspoken blasphemy of himself and his work,—that is the unpardonable sin. Those who commit such wickedness are "rejected" even here; and their final doom shall resemble that of the barren land, "whose end is to be burned."

Learn, in conclusion, that—in spite of all appearances—only he is a Christian who has undergone the new birth, and who is living the new life of likeness to Christ, which flows from it.

Vers. 9—20.—*Another exhortation to steadfastness.* Each stage in the argument of the Epistle is relieved by a hortatory passage intended to confirm and cheer the Hebrews in their Christian faith. Indeed, the one duty upon which the whole book lays stress is that of believing steadfastness.

I. THE EXHORTATION. It assumes various forms. 1. "*Be not sluggish.*" (Ver. 12.) The Hebrews, in the perplexity of their situation by reason of the temptations of Judaism, had begun to sink into spiritual listlessness. We, too, are extremely prone

to carry our Christian profession without earnestness, and to do our Christian work without energy. 2. *"Show the same diligence."* (Ver. 11.) The Hebrews had bestirred themselves in bestowing sympathy and succour upon their afflicted brethren, and the apostle longs to see them equally energetic in other departments of Christian duty. Success in spiritual life, as in any other sphere, can only be attained in connection with diligence. 3. *Seek "the full assurance of hope."* (Ver. 11.) They must not waver between Christianity and Judaism, but cherish an unfaltering persuasion of the reality of gospel blessings, notwithstanding that the full fruition of these is reserved for the future life.

II. SOME ENCOURAGEMENTS. In this paragraph the apostle does not prolong the terrific strain of the preceding verses. To continue it longer would have but depressed the hearts of his readers, and defeated his own benignant purpose towards them. So, after we have, as it were, trodden (vers. 4—8) upon the hot lava of a volcano, we now enter (ver. 9) upon a smiling and beautiful landscape, all carpeted with green and blossoming with flowers. "A bruised reed shall he not break," expresses the spirit of the passage now before us. We have here a variety of encouragements. 1. *The fruit which their faith had borne already.* (Vers. 9, 10.) Brotherly love is a principal trait of the Christian character; and the Hebrews had been kind to their afflicted fellow-believers, for Jesus' sake. God had not forgotten their liberality; and to the apostle it had seemed as an evidence of the reality of their conversion. The spiritual attainments which a believer has already reached should encourage him to perseverance. 2. *The example of their sainted ancestors.* (Ver. 12.) Imitation occupies a principal place in our life, and is an important factor in the development of character. It wields immense power in the domain of morals and religion. So, the Bible is very largely a Book of biographies; and these are given us to incite us to follow the footsteps of the good and true. We, as well as these Hebrew converts, should be "imitators" of the peerage of Old Testament heroes (ch. xi.). And we of this century should imitate, besides, the great soul-stars of Christendom, the fathers of our own Church, the sainted men of our town, the departed of our own sanctuary, and of our own fireside. 3. *God's faithfulness to his word and oath.* (Vers. 13—18.) Having singled out particularly the steadfastness of Abraham, and quoted God's oath to him (Gen. xxii. 16—18), the author shows that this oath is still a strong encouragement to Abraham's children who have embraced Christianity. For the Divine promise and oath to Abraham were spiritual rather than temporal; they have been continued to us; and they have been confirmed by the cross of Christ, and sealed by his resurrection and ascension (2 Cor. i. 20). 4. *The greatness of the Christian's hope.* (Vers. 19, 20.) The Jewish temple and the institutions of the theocracy were very soon to pass away for ever; so that it was unreasonable to place reliance upon them. The one sure anchorage of spiritual hope is in that heavenly sanctuary which Jesus has entered for us as our everlasting High Priest.

Vers. 19, 20.—*Our anchor and anchorage.* This text suggests, first of all, that the Christian life is a life of storm. It is exposed to storms of persecution, of doubt, of remorse, of inward corruption, of outward adversity, and to the last great storm of death. But, blessed be God, believers possess complete security in the midst of these storms.

I. CHRISTIAN HOPE IS OUR ANCHOR. Of the three great abiding graces—faith, hope, love—hope is the one which often receives least prominence in our thoughts. Faith is the root, and love the full-blown flower, of piety; whereas hope occupies an intermediate position. Hope is, in fact, just one of the first developments of faith—a sprout from the root of faith. The object of faith may be either good or bad; but the object of hope is always good. Hope in its essence is just the desire of good, with the expectation of by-and-by obtaining it. Now, hope has this blessed function—it soothes and calms and cheers the mind in the midst of storm and trouble. Even natural hope is "as an anchor of the soul." What drudgery would the world's business be apart from hope! Where would our great statesmen, our inventors and discoverers, come from, were it not for hope?

"Every gift of noble origin
Is breathed upon by Hope's perpetual breath."
(Wordsworth.)

It was hope that buoyed up poor Columbus, and that inspired the lion-hearted Livingstone. But, as ancient seamen called the strongest anchor of their ships "the sacred anchor," and reserved it as "the last hope" for times when the vessel was in real peril; so, gospel hope is the sacred anchor of every good man. And, truly, this hope is the most influential of all hopes. It is the hope of eternal life;—the hope of looking upon Christ in his glory, of seeing the King in his beauty. Notice, also, the properties ascribed to this anchor. 1. *It is sure.* In substance strong and firm, and of weight proportionate to the tonnage of the vessel—in every way worthy of the greatness of our nature. No fear that it may fail: this "hope putteth not to shame." 2. *It is steadfast.* It takes a firm grip of the holding-ground, and will neither break nor drag. No force of wind or current will be able to tear it from its hold. How comes it that spiritual hope has these essential qualities? It is "both sure and steadfast" because it is the gift of God, and therefore good and perfect, like all other Divine gifts. It is so, also, because it is essentially connected with the cable of faith in the promise and oath of God.

II. CHRIST IN HEAVEN IS OUR ANCHORAGE. The Saviour has gone before us into heaven, through the blue "veil" or ocean of the sky; and our hope follows him thither. 1. *Our holding-ground is in heaven.* Happy are all who are convinced that there is no safe anchorage for their souls anywhere below! Each of us has had many earthly hopes that have been baffled; but the hope which finds its object in heaven is "a living hope." Its holding-ground is beyond the frontiers of change, and out of reach of the touch of death. God help us amid the storms of life to look, not so much down upon the fierce floods which are beating about our feet, but rather upward to the quiet, holy heaven, and to our great Hope that is there! 2. *Our holding-ground is Christ himself in his perpetual priesthood.* Even heaven is nothing at all to the believer apart from Christ. The Lord Jesus himself is "our Hope." He is the Son of God, who knows all our troubles, and has power to control and subdue them. He is the Son of man, and full, therefore, of warm, human sympathy. He is our "High Priest," ever-loving, interceding, armed with authority and overflowing with tenderness. And he is our "Forerunner," who has entered heaven in our name, and left the golden gate open behind him, because he has arranged that we are to follow (John xiv. 1—4).

Learn, in conclusion: 1. The anchor of hope does not quell the storm; what it does is to hold fast the vessel. 2. The excellence [of the anchor and the strength of the holding-ground make the believer's security most absolute. 3. The sinner's only safety is to cast anchor in Christ.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*A summons to Christian progress.* "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ," etc. Our subject has two main branches.

I. THE BEGINNING ALREADY MADE IN CHRISTIANITY. Here are six first principles or elements of Christianity, with which those persons to whom this letter is addressed are supposed to be acquainted. These elementary principles may be classified in three groups of two in each group. (1) Two initial experiences of the Christian life. (2) Two Christian symbolic customs. (3) Two Christian doctrines of future events. Let us briefly notice each of these first principles. 1. "*Repentance from dead works.*" Expositors differ as to whether these are the works of the Law, or the works of sin, which indicate spiritual death and lead on to eternal death. Probably the writer means the observances of the moral and ceremonial laws of the Jews, by which they sought to attain unto righteousness and to commend themselves unto God. And in our own times there are those who endeavour by the performance of righteous and praiseworthy actions to merit acceptance with God. Such works are dead unless they spring from a heart in vital sympathy with God. Repentance from these works is the renunciation of them as a ground of acceptance with God, and the withdrawal of our faith from them. 2. "*Faith toward God.*" That this is the Christian faith in God is clear from the earlier clause—"the principles of the doctrine of Christ." Probably, as Alford suggests, the best exposition of this faith in God is found in the words of St. Paul: "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly,

his faith is reckoned for righteousness" (Rom. iv. 5). It is faith in God as revealed in Jesus Christ. And as by repentance the Christian abandons the dead works of the Law as a reason for his acceptance with God, so by this faith he enters into vital and saving relation to the living God. 3. "*The teaching of baptisms, or washings.*" There are three, or more, interpretations of this clause. That the baptisms are (1) the baptism of John and the Christian baptism; (2) the baptism of water and that of the Holy Spirit; (3) the various washings of the ceremonial law of the Jews, and probably including the baptism of John and Christian baptism. The nature and significance of these washings in their relation to Christianity would certainly be taught to Jewish converts to the Christian faith. The chief point for us is this, that all these washings and baptisms were symbols of spiritual cleansing. The one essential baptism, which is also the fulfilment of all other baptisms, is that of the Holy Spirit. 4. "*The teaching of the laying on of hands.*" This may mean, as Alford says, "the reference and import of all that imposition of hands, which was practised under the Law, and found in some cases its continuance under the gospel." To us, however, it seems more probable that it indicates the impartation of spiritual gifts, and especially the gift of the Holy Ghost, of which the laying on of hands was the outward symbol, as in Acts viii. 15—17; xix. 6; 1 Tim. iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 6. 5. "*The teaching of resurrection of the dead.*" This doctrine was brought into clear light by the great Teacher. "The hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice," etc. (John v. 28, 29). The apostles also declared it: "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." Our Lord's resurrection forcibly confirmed the doctrine. 6. "*The teaching of eternal judgment.*" A future and general judgment is certain. Jesus Christ pictorially described it (Matt. xxv. 31—46). St. Paul asserted it: "God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness," etc.; "We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. . . . Each one of us shall give account of himself to God." This judgment is characterized as "eternal," probably because it is "part of the proceedings of eternity, and thus bearing the character and stamp of eternal." Its awards, moreover, are eternal (Matt. xxv. 46). Now, these six things belong to the beginning of Christian teaching and life; they are "first principles of the oracles of God." And they are to be left. How? Not in the sense of discarding them, but of advancing beyond them. Or, as in the figure employed in the text, they constitute a foundation, and are to be left behind as the foundation of a building is left as the superstructure rises towards completeness. "When we have once become settled in the *first principles* of our religion," says John Howe, "we need not be always exposing them to a continual examination; for when shall that building be finished, the foundations of which must be every day torn up anew, upon pretence of further caution and more diligent search? Or when will he reach his journey's end, who is continually vexed with causeless anxieties about his way, and whether he began a right course, yea or no?"

II. THE GOAL YET TO BE ATTAINED IN CHRISTIANITY. "Let us go on unto perfection," or full growth, or maturity. This may be said to comprise: 1. *Maturity of Christian knowledge.* Advancement beyond the elementary principles unto the higher and deeper truths of the oracles of God. A clearer apprehension and a wider comprehension of religious truth. 2. *Maturity of Christian experience.* The truth apprehended by the intellect must be assimilated by the heart and soul. Mental perceptions must grow into spiritual convictions. From repentance and faith the Christian must press on into the enjoyment of "the fulness of the blessing of Christ" (cf. Eph. iii. 16—19). 3. *Maturity of Christian conduct.* The truth apprehended by the intellect and experienced in the heart, must be expressed in the life and practice. Growing religious faith and feeling should be manifested by words and actions of ever-increasing conformity to the holy will of God. In this respect let us imitate the example of St. Paul: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect," etc. (Phil. iii. 12—14).—W. J.

Ver. 8.—*Deo volente.* "And this will we do, if God permit." We have in these words—

I. AN EXCELLENT RESOLUTION EXPRESSED. 1. *The thing resolved upon is good.* "This will we do;" i.e. leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and press on

unto perfection. Wishing and hoping are of little avail without resolution. 2. *The form of the resolution is good.* "This will we do." The writer had himself long passed beyond the elementary principles of Christianity, and had made considerable progress towards perfection; but, placing himself by the side of his readers, he says, "This will we do." It is far more inspiring to say, "Let us do," than to say, "Do ye."

II. AN IMPORTANT CONDITION RECOGNIZED. "If God permit." This does not indicate any doubt on the part of the writer as to whether Christian progress was in harmony with the will of God or not. But it is a becoming acknowledgment of: 1. *The absolute sovereignty of God.* Our times are in his hand. "Man proposes, God disposes." The apostles frequently realized and expressed this. St. Paul: "I will return again unto you, if God will" (Acts xviii. 21; see also Rom. xv. 32; 1 Cor. iv. 19; Jas. iv. 15). 2. *The uncertainty of human life and opportunities.* "God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways." "Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust." "Ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this, or that." 3. *Human dependence upon the Divine will and help.* In the matter of Christian progress we depend upon him for many things; e.g. for the preservation of our reason, the continuance of the means of grace, the help of his Holy Spirit, etc. "Apart from me," said Christ, "ye can do nothing." Let all our plans be formed in subordination to the will of God. It is not necessary that we should frequently express this sentiment in words, saying, "If God will," or "Please God," or "If God permit," or writing "D.V." Perhaps these expressions are most frequently used by those who but feebly realize their dependence upon him. It is to be feared that as used by many they are empty forms of speech, and that in the sight of Heaven their use is an insincerity, an irreverence, and a taking of the holy Name in vain. But in all things let us cultivate the spirit of humble and hearty dependence upon the holy will of God.—W. J.

Vers. 4—6.—*The relapse for which there is no restoration.* "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened," etc. Let us honestly and earnestly endeavour to lay aside our theological prepossessions, and to apprehend and set forth the meaning of this solemn portion of sacred Scripture. We have in the text—

I. AN EXALTED CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. "Those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift," etc. Here is a cumulative experience of gospel blessings. 1. *Spiritual illumination.* "Those who were once enlightened." The mind and heart of the unrenewed man are in a condition of spiritual ignorance and darkness. The wicked are "darkened in their understanding." In conversion men "turn from darkness to light." In the case described in the text man has been enlightened as to his spiritual state, his need of salvation, and the salvation provided in Jesus Christ (cf. Eph. i. 17, 18). 2. *Experience of gospel blessings.* "And tasted of the heavenly gift." Tasted is not to be taken in the sense of a mere taste, but a personal experience, as in ch. ii. 9, "Taste death for every man;" and 1 Pet. ii. 3, "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." In the case before us, man, through Christ, experiences the forgiveness of sins, and peace with God, and spiritual strength. 3. *Participation in the presence and influences of the Holy Spirit.* "And were made partakers of the Holy Ghost." They share in his instructing, comforting, sanctifying presence and power. "The Spirit of God dwelleth in" them (1 Cor. iii. 16; Rom. viii. 9). 4. *Experience of the excellence of God's Word.* "And tasted the good Word of God." Probably there is a special reference to the comforting, encouraging, strengthening power of the inspired Word. Or the good "word" is the word of promise, and the tasting of it is the experience of its gracious fulfilment. The use of the Hebrew equivalents supports this view (see Josh. xxi. 45; xxiii. 15; Jer. xxix. 10; xxxiii. 14; Zech. i. 13). 5. *Experience of the spiritual powers of the gospel age.* "And tasted the powers of the world to come," or "the age to come." The expression "signifies a personal experience of the mighty energy and saving power of the gospel." Here, then, the religion of Jesus Christ is exhibited as a gracious light in the intellect, a blessed experience in the heart, and a practical redemptive power in the life. How complete and exalted is the personal Christian experience thus delineated!

II. AN AWFUL SPIRITUAL POSSIBILITY. "If they shall fall away . . . they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." 1. *Of falling*

from an exalted spiritual condition. We have noticed the advanced development of Christian character and the full enjoyment of Christian privileges sketched by the writer; and now he speaks of falling away from these great and gracious experiences. The higher the exaltation attained, the more terrible will be the injury sustained, if one should fall from such a height. 2. *Of incurring the darkest guilt.* "They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." The crucifixion of the Lord Jesus was the blackest crime in all the dark annals of human wrong-doing. And if any one having really and richly enjoyed the blessings of the gospel of Christ should fall back into sin, renouncing Christ and Christianity, he would repeat in spirit that terrible crime. "It is often said," wrote F. W. Robertson, "'My sins nailed him to the tree.' There is a sense in which this contains a deep truth. . . . The crisis of the conflict between the kingdoms of good and evil took place in the death of Christ: the highest manifestation of good in him, the highest manifestation of evil in the persons of those who saw the divinest excellence, and called it Satanic evil. To call evil good, and good evil, to call Divine good Satanic wickedness,—there is no state lower than this. It is the rottenness of the core of the heart; it is the unpardonable because irrecoverable sin. With this evil, in its highest development, the Son of man came into collision. He died unto sin. The prince of this world came and found nothing congenial in him. He was his victim, not his subject. So far as I belong to that kingdom or fight in that warfare, it may be truly said, the Saviour died by my sin. . . . I am a sharer in the spirit to which he fell a victim."¹ But is such a fall as this really possible? To us it seems that the teaching of the Bible and the moral nature of man admit of but one reply as to this possibility. (1) The hypothesis of the text is not an idle one. It is inconceivable that the Holy Spirit of God should have inspired the writer to mention so awful a fall if it had been an utter impossibility. (2) The many warnings against apostasy which are addressed to Christians in the sacred Scriptures witness to the possibility of such apostasy. This letter to the Hebrews is one long and powerful warning, persuasion, and exhortation against falling away from Christ. (3) The constitution of our nature shows this fall to be possible. We are free either to loyally serve God or to wickedly rebel against him, and must ever remain so, or moral distinctions would no longer be applicable to us.

III. AN APPALLING MORAL IMPOSSIBILITY. "It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." This "impossible" may not be enfeebled into "very difficult," or other similar expression, as may be seen by an examination of the other passages of this Epistle in which it is found (ch. vi. 18; x. 4; xi. 6). The reason of this impossibility is the moral character and condition of those of whom (should there ever be any of such character) it is predicated. Having once experienced the Divine renewal, they have utterly fallen away from it, and now scornfully reject the only power by which their renewal could be effected. The mightiest spiritual influence in the universe, even the love of God in the death of Jesus Christ for the salvation of sinners, is derided by them. "They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." "They tear him out of the recesses of their hearts where he had fixed his abode, and exhibit him to the open scoffs and reproach of the world, as something powerless and common" (cf. ch. x. 29). Dr. Parker forcibly inquires, "If men have insulted God, poured contempt upon his Son, counted the blood of the covenant as an unworthy thing, grieved and quenched the Holy Spirit, what can possibly remain of a remedial kind? The inquiry is one on which reason may expend its powers. What remains after God has been exhausted?" Let the Christian earnestly heed the solemn warning of our text. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation;" "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for doing these things, ye shall never fall." The surest way of guarding against this terrible fall is to aim at and seek to realize constant spiritual progress. "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection," etc.—W. J.

Ver. 10.—*Ministering to the saints.* "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work," etc. Our text leads us to consider the ministry to the saints in three aspects.

I. IN ITS EXEMPLARY EXERCISE. "Ye ministered unto the saints, and still do minister." 1. *The nature of this ministry.* (1) Probably pecuniary aid to the poor.

¹ 'Life and Letters,' i. 205.

Saints may be in secular poverty. Lazarus the saint was an afflicted beggar; the man who was not a saint was "rich, clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day." "Did not God choose them that are poor as to the world to be rich in faith?" etc. (Jas. ii. 6). The persons addressed in our Epistle probably sent contributions of money to certain of their fellow-Christians who were in poverty (see Acts xi. 29, 30; Rom. xv. 25, 26; 1 Cor. xvi. 1; 2 Cor. viii., ix.). (2) Sympathy with the afflicted and persecuted. "Becoming partakers with them that were so used" (i.e. reproached and persecuted). "For ye both had compassion on them that were in bonds," etc. (ch. x. 32-34). A worthy tribute this to most noble and beautiful conduct. Such ministering to the saints was especially becoming in the disciples of him who "bore our griefs and carried our sorrows," and who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister," etc. 2. *The continuousness of this ministry.* "And still do minister." Their kind feeling did not expend itself in one effort or in one contribution. Their conduct in this respect is exemplary. We shall do well if we imitate them (cf. Rom. xii. 13; Gal. vi. 10; ch. xiii. 16; 1 John iii. 17).

II. IN ITS EXALTED MOTIVE. "The love which ye showed towards his Name." They ministered to the saints because they loved God. This is the noblest of motives. Let us consider it. It involves: 1. *Gratitude to God.* They ministered to those who were his, because he had done so much for them. Gratitude eagerly inquires, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" We serve him by serving his saints. 2. *Devotion to God.* This ministry was expressive of more than gratitude to God. The Christian's love to God is more than gratitude to him. It includes reverent admiration of him, and willing consecration to him of the heart's holiest feeling and the life's best service. And ministry to his saints for the love which we have for him he accepts as ministry to himself. "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it," etc. (Matt. xxv. 40, 45). 3. *Recognition of the common relationship to God of both the givers and the receivers of this help.* They showed their love toward his Name by this ministry, because they felt that they and those to whom they ministered were alike his children. They realized their common brotherhood, hence they voluntarily shared their afflictions. This is the most exalted motive for Christian service—love to God. It is most disinterested, most inspiring, most sustaining.

III. IN ITS CERTAIN REWARD. "God is not unrighteous to forget your work," etc. But did this ministry to the saints give the ministers a claim upon God for reward? Would he have been unjust if he had not remembered and rewarded their works? Two facts compel us to answer, "No;" viz. (1) that all the good works of Christians are imperfect; (2) that the inspiration for every good work proceeds from him. "The righteousness of God spoken of in our passage," says Ebrard, "is that which leads, guides, and governs every man according to the particular stage of development which he occupies. It is here affirmed of God that he does not give up to perdition a man who can still in any way be saved, in whom the new life is not yet entirely extinct, and who has not yet entirely fallen away; but that he seeks to draw every one as long as they will allow themselves to be drawn." It would not be just in God to withdraw his gracious assistance from one who was producing the fruits of Christian faith; for he has pledged his word that he will save such persons. He will not forget their work and labour of love. "God will not forget you, for that would be ceasing to be God. If God were to forget for one moment, the universe would grow black—vanish—rush out again from the realm of law and order into chaos and night." Most encouraging are the declarations of this truth in the Bible (see Deut. iv. 31; Isa. xlix. 14-16; ch. xiii. 5). This not forgetting their work and the love which they showed toward his Name implies: 1. *Preservation from apostasy.* This is the point of connection with the main argument. Their production of the fruits of Christian faith was an evidence that they were not falling away from Christ. And God would keep those who out of love to him ministered to his saints. 2. *Generous recognition of their services.* Nothing is overlooked, nothing of Christian work is unrecognized or unacknowledged by him. 3. *Gracious reward of their services.* (See Matt. x. 42; Mark ix. 41.)

CONCLUSION. 1. *An example of Christian ministry.* Imitate it. 2. *An example of a sure method of guarding against apostasy.* Do not think of apostasy, but of continuous progress. Produce the fruits of good works out of love to God, and you most effectively preclude spiritual defection or decline.—W. J.

Ver. 12.—*Imitating the inheritors of the promises.* "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them," etc. Great is our ignorance as to the life and condition of those who have left this world. The ancient heathens speculated as to the state and circumstances of the departed. The Old Testament Scriptures afforded some light on the question; but not very much. "Our Saviour Jesus Christ abolished death, and brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel." But still at times anxious inquiries arise within us. When the awful subject has been pressed upon us as we have looked upon some one passing through the experience of death, the questions arise, "Where is he? Where are the departed? And what are they? Are they asleep or awake? In heaven or in hell? or in some not final, intermediate state?" In addition to the light which comes directly from Christ, we learn from our text that the good have entered upon the promised blessings, have taken possession of their patrimony. This should afford us great satisfaction and encouragement. We may profitably dwell upon three facts suggested by our text.

I. THERE ARE THOSE WHO HAVE ENTERED UPON THE POSSESSION OF THE BLESSINGS PROMISED BY GOD TO HIS FAITHFUL PEOPLE. "Them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." What are these promises? What is this inheritance? It is variously described. "Perfection" (ver. 1); "the joy of our Lord" (Matt. xxv. 21); a "mansion" in our "Father's house" (John xiv. 2); the rest which remaineth for the people of God (ch. iv. 9); "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled," etc. (1 Pet. i. 4). In a word, it is "eternal life"—heaven. There are some who have taken possession of this inheritance. With them it is not future, but present; not believed in, but realized; not hoped for, but enjoyed. The eleventh chapter of this Epistle refers to a great number who have entered upon the inheritance. St. John saw "a great multitude, which no man could number," etc. (Rev. vii. 9, 10). Millions more have joined them from prison-cells, from the martyr's gory block and fiery stake, from dread battle-fields, from wrecks on furious seas, from the wards of noble hospitals, and from the quiet chambers and gentle ministries of loving homes. The countless hosts are increasing every hour. How inspiring is this fact!

II. THEY HAVE ENTERED UPON THIS POSSESSION BY THE EXERCISE OF FAITH AND PATIENCE. *Faith* in the existence of the promised blessings and in the promise to bestow them, is what is meant here. Faith in the unseen, in the future life, in heaven, in God and his promises. Many who inherit the promises were giants in faith (ch. xi. 33—35). *And patience.* They were sorely tried, but they patiently endured. They had to wait the fulfilment of the promises, and they waited patiently. But "patience" here does not simply mean passive endurance, but active fidelity; not merely quiet waiting, but diligent working. It is "patience in well-doing" (Rom. ii. 7). By these means they entered upon the inheritance—faith, patience, and diligence; believing, waiting, and working.

III. THESE INHERITORS OF THE PROMISED BLESSINGS ARE EXAMPLES TO US. "That ye be not slothful, but imitators of them," etc. We are greatly influenced by examples. We are imitators by nature. To a great extent we have become what we are by imitation. Unconsciously we imitate others. Unconsciously others imitate us. But as to intentional imitation—whom shall we imitate? There is but One whom we may imitate in all things; but one perfect Example. But to a certain extent all holy men are examples to us; all who have entered heaven are worthy of imitation in some respects. We tread the same path which they trod—"the King's highway of holiness." We aim at the same end—perfection, eternal life, heaven. They have gained their end, succeeded in their pursuit, reached the goal. Let us imitate them: 1. *In their faith.* Believe in God's promises of perfection and blessedness. But this involves faith in Jesus Christ; because (1) he revealed to us perfection, eternal life, and heaven; (2) he is for us the only way to perfection and heaven. "In none other is there salvation," etc. (Acts iv. 12). Hold fast your confidence in eternal life, and trust in the Lord and Saviour for its attainment. 2. *In their patience.* In darkness and tempest, in sin and sorrow, let us not lose heart or hope; but trust and wait. And, like theirs, let our waiting be joined with working. "Be not slothful." Their lives were active and earnest. Shall we be slothful in an age like this? slothful in a life like ours? slothful when heaven is at stake? Let us be imitators of the illustrious host who inherit the promises. "Be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding

in the work of the Lord," etc. (1 Cor. xv. 58). Are any of you imitators of those who inherit the threatenings? Change your course; for your way is evil and the end terrible. "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good," etc.—W. J.

Vers. 19, 20.—*The anchor of the soul.* "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul," etc. Christians have been exhorted to imitate "them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." There are most excellent reasons for their doing so; for God's purposes and promises are most sure. They were not lightly or hastily made; they are most solemnly confirmed; they are "immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie;" and they supply the strongest encouragement to the Christian's hopes (vers. 18—19). Notice—

I. THE OBJECT OF THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE. This is not explicitly stated in the text; but it is implied in it, and it may be gathered from the argument of the writer. We may define it as the attainment of his destiny, or the perfection of his being. But to mention some particulars: 1. *Freedom from sin and suffering.* The rest which remaineth for the people of God certainly includes deliverance from sin, and from pain of body, and distress of mind, and darkness and sorrow of spirit. We must become free from sin, or our salvation will be neither complete nor true; for sin would mar the fairest realms, and fill them with discord and misery. 2. *Attainment of spiritual perfection.* "Let us press on unto perfection" (ver. 1). We hope for more clear, more correct, more comprehensive knowledge; for purity of heart which will be perfect in its kind, though not in its degree; for love which shall be perfect in like manner; and for harmony between our purposes and performances, our willing and doing. We are inspired by the sublime hope of becoming like unto our Lord and Saviour (1 John iii. 2, 3). 3. *Enjoyment of heavenly blessedness.* Through Christ God will bring "many sons unto glory." Jesus has entered heaven as our Forerunner, and we hope to follow him thither. We are "looking for the blessed hope," etc. (Titus ii. 13). "God hath begotten us again unto a living hope," etc. (1 Pet. i. 3—5). This glorious hope is "set before us" as a prize to be won; it is "set before us" to animate our spirits, to strengthen our hands in Christian work, and to quicken our feet in the Christian race. Contrast this with any inferior object of hope; e.g. worldly possessions, worldly pleasures, worldly honours. These do not satisfy; that does. These degrade the soul; that exalts it. These will fail those who have attained and cherished them; that will lead to splendid and perpetual fulfilment.

II. THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and entering into that which is within the veil." This hope is the stay of the soul amid a tumultuous world. It is clearly implied: 1. *That the voyage of life is marked by storms.* These storms are occasioned by bodily afflictions, temporal anxieties and losses, family trials, domestic and social bereavements, and spiritual conflicts. 2. *That these storms try and imperil the soul.* There is danger of striking upon the hidden rock of some subtle and insidious sin, of being driven by the wild winds of passion against stern and stony cliffs, or of being hurried helplessly onward by fierce storms of sorrow. The dangers in navigating the sea of life are numerous and various. Many a noble soul has reached the desired haven sore damaged in life's storms, while some, alas! have "made shipwreck concerning the faith." 3. *That the Christian's hope, as an anchor, will enable him safely to outride the storms.* "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast," etc. Ebrard's note seems to us both true and beautiful: "Two figures are here, not so much mixed as, in a very elegant manner, combined. The author might compare the world to a sea, the soul to a ship, the future still concealed glory to the covered bottom of the sea, the remote firm land stretching beneath the water and covered by the water. Or he might compare the present life upon earth to the forecourt, and the future blessedness to the heavenly sanctuary, which is still, as it were, concealed from us by a veil. He has, however, combined the two figures. The soul, like a shipwrecked mariner, clings to an anchor, and sees not where the cable of the anchor runs to, where it is made fast; it knows, however, that it is firmly fixed behind the veil which conceals from it the future glory, and that if it only keeps fast hold of the anchor, it will, in due time, be drawn in with the anchor by a rescuing hand into the holiest of all." This hope enables the Christian in deep distress to say, "Why art

thou cast down, O my soul?" (Pa. xlii. 11). And in wildest storms it inspires him to sing, "God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in trouble," etc. (Pa. xlii. 1—3, 7).

"Hope, as an anchor firm and sure, holds fast
The Christian's vessel, and defies the blast."

(Cowper.)

And thus "we are saved by hope."

III. THE ASSURED REALIZATION OF THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE. Two things assure us of the fulfilment of our hope. 1. *The character of the anchor and the anchorage.* The anchor is "both sure and steadfast, and entering into that which is within the veil" (cf. Rom. v. 1—5; 2 Thess. ii. 16; 1 Tim. i. 1). 2. *The presence of Jesus as our Forerunner in heaven.* "Within the veil, whither as Forerunner on our behalf Jesus entered." The veil spoken of is that which divided the holy of holies from the holy place. "Within the veil" is a figurative expression for heaven. The presence of the Son of man in heaven is a guarantee of the realization of the hope of every believer in him. He entered heaven as our Representative, and "as a Forerunner on our behalf." "Where I am, there shall also my servant be." "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you," etc. (John xiv. 2, 3). Mark, then, the absolute necessity of vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ. One with him by faith here, we shall be one with him in blessedness hereafter. "Christ in you, the Hope of glory. . . . Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our Life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory."—W. J.

Vers. 4—10.—*The danger of apostasy arising from immature apprehension of Christian truth.* Continuation of the parenthetical clause on the evil of inability to apprehend the deeper truths about Christ. *Whatever this passage means, it contains nothing to discourage the true believer.* 1. *Because of the plain declarations that the believer cannot perish.* This is not a confidence based on isolated texts, though, if any truth may rest on such, it is surely this; but it rests on the most fundamental facts of Scripture, viz. the purpose of the Father that all who believe should be saved; the mediation of the Son for securing the continued faith of his people; the work of the Spirit to the same end; the fact that it is eternal life which is bestowed on faith. 2. *Because there are certain considerations here which are often overlooked; e.g.* these words were written on purpose to encourage the Hebrews, and therefore to find discouragement in them must be to read them wrong; moreover, whatever evil it points to is with regard to those who "fall away," and not those who fall; and further, whatever impossibility to renew the apostate this speaks of, it is not impossibility on God's part—it is of man's impossibility that he is speaking. It is useless to reiterate these fundamental truths to those who close their ears to them; it is impossible to renew them unto repentance; but God is "not willing that any should perish." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;" "Whosoever will, let him come;" "The things which are impossible to man are possible to God." 3. *Because what is stated of the persons referred to here is true of non-believers, and the passage therefore may, without difficulty, be applied only to these; e.g.* "were once enlightened;" others beside Christians are enlightened, as Balaam, "the man whose eyes were opened." "And have tasted of the heavenly gift," which, as John Owen says, is not eating nor digesting. "And were made partakers of the Holy Ghost;" that may refer, as in Acts xix. 2, 6, to the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost which were given to other than regenerate men, as Judas. "And have tasted of the good Word of God, and the powers of the age to come;" it is no misuse of language to apply this to those who, by the preaching of the gospel, are led to deep feeling and serious thought. So, however natural it may be to apply all this to the Christian, it does not necessarily apply to him; and when we find the tenor of Scripture is against such application, we accept the latter alternative fearlessly. Subject—*The danger of apostasy arising from immature apprehension of Christian truth.*

I. THE SOLEMN WARNING OF THE DANGER AND GUILT OF APOSTASY. 1. *These men were in danger of "falling away," or there would be no meaning in the apostle's words.* He would not have written the Epistle if he had not feared. He does not say the Christian could fall away, but he implies that these men could. He is not sure of their

possession of vital godliness, only continuance is the test of vitality. All outward Christian characteristics may be ours, yet the apostate's guilt and doom may be ours. 2. *But this "falling away" is in reality the rejection of Christ.* "They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh;" i.e. reject him, repeat in effect for themselves the old cry, "Away with him! crucify him!" Note that to turn the back on Christ is to repeat the guilt of the men of eighteen centuries ago, and the Saviour's grief. 3. *And this rejection is followed by the final judgment of God.* "For the land which hath drunk in the rain," etc., equivalent to "to receive God's good gifts, and bring forth fruit as the result," is to ensure the Divine blessing; but to receive them and only produce thistles is to stand in danger of God's curse. What can be the hope of the rejecter of God's Son? What sin can be greater, or doom more terrible? The rejection of Christ is the great damning sin of all.

II. THE GRACIOUS HOPE OF THEIR PRESERVATION FROM THE SIN OF APOSTASY. "But, beloved, we are persuaded," etc. 1. *Self-denying service for God may be an evidence of true Christian life.* Religious activity is no proof of Christian life, but it affords reason for hope that the life is there. Where there is no religious activity there is little reason to believe in the existence of vital piety, for it is the genius of Christianity to spread itself. 2. *One reward of this service is the bestowment of sustaining and delivering grace.* Our works cannot claim anything of God, but he is pleased to reward them; and what if the reward for fidelity in a few things should be grace to be faithful in many things! In heaven, more glory will be the reward of service; on earth, more grace.

III. THE NECESSARY EFFORT, IF APOSTASY IS TO BE AVOIDED. The tenth verse shows that we are only kept from "falling away" by Divine grace; but since God gives grace through human instrumentalities, there is something for us to do if we are to be kept from this fatal evil. That fact is recognized here, for the former part of the parenthesis must be read with this; there we get the antidote to the tendency to apostatize. 1. *Growth in the Divine life.* You must either grow or decline. Growth is the only safeguard to "falling away." Those whose early vigour is becoming feeble and feeble are on the road to prove they never possessed Divine vitality, and to the crucifixion to themselves of the Son of God. 2. *This growth is only possible through the deeper knowledge of Christ.* Growth needs solid food. Milk may sustain life; only solid food can build up life. Growth in the knowledge of Christ is the secret of growth in his likeness.—O. N.

Vers. 11—20.—*The influence of hope on Christian steadfastness.* The third part of the parenthesis. To the solemn warning against apostasy he hastens to add how they can be delivered from the evil, and tells them of the power of hope on Christian steadfastness.

I. THE WRITER ENCOURAGES THE CULTIVATION OF CHRISTIAN HOPE. He says he is full of hope with regard to them, and desires that they would cherish that hope for themselves. (Note: It is remarkable, if the previous verses are aimed against assurance, that they should occur in a passage which reveals the writer's ardent desire not to destroy assurance, but to increase it!) 1. *Hope must be preceded by faith.* The Epistle is addressed to those who have faith, and to these it is said—Go on to hope. Hope is higher than faith. Faith reveals; hope anticipates. 2. *Hope is, to a great extent, the fruit of spiritual diligence.* "Diligence unto," etc. It is the work of the Spirit ("Abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost"), but it is also spoken of as though it were secured by human diligence. God gives this fruit in the soul's vineyard to human toil. Hope can be cultivated by an increase of Christian knowledge; its lack is due to neglect of Scripture. Also by constant meditation—meditation on the things we know about. Also by the right use of the discipline of sorrow, for sorrow carries in it the message, "Set your affections on things above." We can have hope if we are willing to pay the price for it. 3. *Hope tends to the production of full assurance.* It is the fruit of assurance, and bears a seed which sows itself in the heart, and produces assurance in its turn. Earthly hopes do not tend to assurance—they may disappoint; but the hope based on Scripture is declared to be the work of the Spirit; and since he could not deceive us, there must be a reality corresponding to this. "If it were not so, I would have told you."

II. THE WRITER AFFIRMS THAT THE GROUND OF CHRISTIAN HOPE IS THE INFALLIBILITY OF GOD'S WORD ABOUT CHRIST. In showing the ground on which hope is possible, the case of Abraham is introduced as an illustration. He was a conspicuous example of hope (Rom. iv. 18; ch. xi. 10), and his hope is here said to have been founded on the Divine promise. Thus: 1. *Christian hope is based on the Divine Word.* Not on experience, feelings, attainments—these are sand; but on the infallible truth of God's utterance—that is rock. 2. *This Divine Word is confirmed by an oath.* God's oath is not more true than his simple declaration, but he condescends to it in pity for our infirm faith. God swears by himself, i.e. he appeals to the perfections of his own nature. Is not as much as that implied in every "Verily, verily, I say unto you"? Think of a soul refusing to trust God when—I say it reverently—he is on his oath! 3. *The particular Word on which hope is based is the Word about Christ's high priesthood.* Our hope is fixed on that which is within the veil, that is, Jesus. (Note: Before this parenthesis begins, the apostle was resting his argument on Ps. cx., "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever," etc. The perpetual high priesthood of Jesus was secured by the Divine oath. In this passage, therefore, the writer is, no doubt, referring to the same oath about Christ, with which the reference to Jesus within the veil corresponds.) In what capacity is Jesus within the veil? *He is there as Redeemer*, presenting his atoning blood which cries for mercy. *He is there as Intercessor*, the High Priest with the graven breastplate, and the incense of prevailing prayer for his people. *He is there as Forerunner*, pledge of his people's exaltation: "Where I am, there shall also," etc. God has said, promised, sworn all this. What an infallible ground of hope for those who simply flee for refuge to lay hold thereof!

III. THE WRITER POINTS OUT THE POWER OF THIS CHRISTIAN HOPE TO PRODUCE CHRISTIAN STEADFASTNESS. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul." They are vacillating, in danger of falling away. Hope can hold them fast. 1. *Hope prevents our drifting away with the current.* In Christ we have reached the soul's haven, but even there—idly rocking on a peaceful sea—we are in peril. Life's calm may lull us to slumber, and noiseless currents carry us away to where he is not—where the soul makes shipwreck, and is saved only "on boards." The antidote to this evil is in the soul's hope fixed on Christ within the veil, the affections set on things above, "where Christ," etc. 2. *Hope holds us safe in the storms.* When a storm is gathering, ships enter the bay and anchor there in safety. Storms of temptation, and sorrow sweeping down on us with a cruel blast, are the time to fix our hope—our longing desire, calm confidence, eager anticipation—on Christ within the veil. To cast out anchor then, and wish for the day, is to ride out the storm unhurt. 3. *Hope keeps us within cheering sight of the shore.* You are come to the harbour, but not permitted to enter; but the anchor of hope holds you fast there, and the sweet sounds and gracious influences of the fair land, to be yours presently, are yours now.—C. N.

Vers. 1—3.—*First principles.* I. NOTICE THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF THE TEACHING WHICH THESE BELIEVERS HAD ENJOYED. The foundations had been laid in those essential truths which embraced "faith toward God," whose constant presence, glorious character, and matchless love in Christ Jesus shone upon their souls, and displaced the chill and darkness of unbelief. This led to the rejection of "dead works," which were works that had no life of God in them. Then followed the doctrine of baptisms; and they were taught the difference between proselyte baptism, the baptism of John, and that which was administered in "the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." The "laying on of hands" was the solemn consecration of the candidate to God; and in the apostolic times was the ceremony connected with the gift of the Holy Ghost and the communication of supernatural powers (Acts viii. 17). "The resurrection of the dead" was declared with explicitness, and the solemn event of the final judgment enforced, in which our Lord would review the life and determine the future condition of mankind. These truths involved many others which were needful to complete the course, and doubtless embraced the atonement of our Lord, the work of the Holy Spirit, personal and social means of grace, which consist of prayer, worship, and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. From such a foundation there should arise the stable fabric of a noble life.

II. THE EXHORTATION TO ADVANCE DEPENDENT UPON THE DIVINE PERMISSION. The

inspired writer places himself among other believers, and associates his purpose and hope to advance with them in the career of that spiritual improvement which shall be crowned with final success. He avows that opportunity and disposition depend upon God alone. It might be that some to whom he wrote had gone so far back and had relapsed into such conditions of neglect and apostasy that he could not positively affirm that they would be awakened to a nobler life and an ardent pursuit of salvation. The bodily life of himself and others was totally dependent upon the will of God, and even at the longest it was as a vapour, that appeareth for a little while and then vanisheth away. Since there are signs in the Epistle that Jewish Christians had "no continuing city," and the predicted overthrow and destruction of Jerusalem might come suddenly, and the opportunities of teaching and worship might be rudely and finally ended, it behoved him to refer to the permission of God that he and others might press on to completer knowledge, larger faith, and nobler service.—B.

Vers. 4—8.—*The motives to perseverance supplied by the sin and punishment of apostasy.* The outlines of the experience of some who have gone back from following Christ are very full and distinct. They include illumination, by which they were translated out of darkness into marvellous light. They had tasted of the heavenly gift of salvation, and had been justified freely by his grace. The Holy Spirit had dwelt within him. They had tasted the good Word of God in the precious promise of eternal life, and had enjoyed the possession of some miraculous powers which are described as "the powers of the age to come." Yet they fell away, and became bold and defiant contemners of the Son of God; and repeated as far as they could the crucifixion of our Lord by their bitter derision of his claims to be the true Messiah. In spirit and speech they put once more the crown of thorns on his brow, the reed in his hand, and cried, "Away with him!" Such daring implety seems to present an example of the sin against the Holy Ghost, which is punished with judicial blindness and impenitency now, and the Divine anger in the life to come. It was impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they refused the only remedy which could restore them; and may have haply resembled some of the serpent-bitten Hebrews in the desert who rejected the Divine provision for their recovery, and paid the penalty of death for their unbelief and disobedience. The passage concludes with an illustration drawn from the cultivation bestowed on different kinds of soil. One is watered by the river of God, which is full of water and cherished by the sunlight, and produces crops for the use and comfort of man. Such soil has received and used the Divine blessing, and is an object of sabbatic delight to him who rejoices in the success of his plant and the comfort of mankind. Another kind of soil represents that nature which, with all the aids of heaven and opportunities of spiritual good, produces objections and disobedience; and "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." For such there is a "fearful looking for of judgment," which is foreshadowed in the curse pronounced upon rebellious Israel: "And that whole land is brimstone, and salt, and burning; it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the Lord overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath" (Deut. xxix. 23). By such varied motives and appeals does inspiration warn us against the sin and punishment of drawing back from Christ, and encourage us by the blessedness of abiding with him for safety and fruitfulness.—B.

f. Vers. 9—12.—*Confident expectation.* I. THE PERSUASION AND PROOF OF THEIR HOPEFUL CONDITION. After the solemn and alarming appeals to their conscience, the inspired writer addresses them with brotherly affection, and, having styled them "beloved," expresses his persuasion that there was in them things that accompanied salvation. They gave clear evidence that they were in Christ, and therefore far from that state of profane contempt which exposed to such fearful retribution. This persuasion was founded upon their persevering love to believers; for they had ministered to them, and continued to express their kindness to the poor of the household of faith. They rendered gracious service to distressed Christians who, in times of persecution and amid the pressure of poverty, needed their help, which was doubtless tendered with sympathy and benignity of manner. Hereafter they would hear the voice of their Lord saying unto them, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it

unto me." Such conduct showed faith, courage, and kindness, and redounded to the honour of the Name of God, and glorified him in the presence of the children of men. Mutual love among Christians was noticed as a peculiarity and distinction by Lucian and the Emperor Julian. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John xiii. 35). In the spirit of Christ, who would not "break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax," the author of the Epistle notices the signs of their spiritual life, and instructs them to look forward to the time when they who cast their bread on the waters shall find it after many days; for God is not only not unrighteous to forget, but delighted to honour and recompense all service rendered to his people and for the glory of his Name.

II. THE EARNEST EXHORTATION TO THE REALIZATION OF THE PRIVILEGE OF CHRISTIAN HOPE. The scope of the appeal reminds us of the words of Paul, who said that he had not attained; but, leaving the things that were behind, he was pressing forward to those that were before. The ideal Christian, in the parable of our Lord, represents unbroken progress from blade to ear, and from the ear to full corn in the ear. Believers are to seek the full assurance of hope, which has a mighty and purifying power; for "we are saved by hope;" and if it is like a ship with outspread sails under a vigorous breeze, the vessel moves with speed to the desired haven. To enjoy this hope there must be a resistance to that torpor and drowsiness which lead us to say, "A little more sleep, a little more slumber, and a little more folding of the hands to sleep." The voice of inspiration is, "Be vigilant;" "Let us not sleep, as do others;" "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise, and Christ shall give thee light." Encouragement is supplied to perseverance from the success which others have attained. "The spirits of just men made perfect" are already reaping the blessed results of their earnest pursuit and unwearied diligence. Faith prompted them to begin and continue the career, and gave them patience to endure the contrast between present trial and future glory. To stimulate in this course, believers are urged to imitate their example, that they may share in the blessedness which they now enjoy.—B.

Vers. 13—20.—*The encouragements to cherish the hope of eternal life.* These assume that there is a strong disposition in men to doubt the veracity of the Divine promise, and in adorable condescension God gives us ample evidence to justify our faith and perseverance. It must be confessed that the abandonment of the Jewish Law, separation from the synagogue, the surrender of earthly pleasure, and submission to manifold trials, require varied reasons to convince and to maintain the conviction of the claims of the gospel. The encouragements consist of the following facts:—

I. THE EXAMPLE OF THE PROMISE AND OATH VOUCHSAFED TO ABRAHAM AND SINCE GLORIOUSLY REALIZED. The patriarch was called by the voice of God to offer up his son on Mount Moriah. It was the highest proof of his faith in Jehovah, and although he received him back in a figure of a nobler sacrifice, "to will was present," and God accepted the purpose of his believing soul. "In the mount of the Lord it was seen" that where there was the sternest trial of his faith there came the most blessed manifestations of the Divine favour, both for himself, his descendants after the flesh, and his more numerous spiritual progeny. God said, "By myself have I sworn, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore" (Gen. xxii. 16, 17). He waited patiently, and obtained the promise in the birth of Isaac; and afterwards he saw the day of Christ, the seed in whom all nations are blessed. The latest portions of the New Testament verify the promise contained in the earliest part of the Old; and John said, after the sealing of the hundred and forty and four thousand of the tribes of Israel, "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" (Rev. vii. 9, 10). "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. iii. 29).

II. THE EXTENSION OF THE BLESSING CONTAINED IN THE PROMISE, AND SANCTIONED BY THE OATH, TO ALL BELIEVERS. The words of grace which were spoken to Abraham

retain their force and application to all who are his children by a living faith. "The Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto us." The patriarch was the heir of the world, a trustee for the future generations of believers. The oath is still valid, and the promise is made by One who cannot lie, and whose self-sufficiency and omnipotence raise him above the temptation and possibility of deception. The oath in human affairs is final, and is an end of all strife; and, to remove all doubt, Jehovah condescends to adopt a human form of appeal, to assure believers of the immovable ground of confidence which they possess and enjoy. The freeness of the promise tends to confirm the confidence of the righteous; for it is the unexpected, unextorted utterance of Divine love to cheer and inspire believers in their way to heaven. Both furnish strong consolation, which is adequate to disarm all earthly sorrows and assaults of their terror, and recalls those cheering images of the Divine love which ancient psalmists often introduce in their exultation and gratitude after deliverance from adversaries, and with cheerful hope of future safety; for "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my Refuge and my Fortress: my God; in him will I trust" (Ps. xci. 1, 2).

III. THE POWER AND CONNECTIONS OF CHRISTIAN HOPE. It is not unnatural to imagine that the writer may have thought of the wild and stormy ocean, from whose waves and turbulence the mariner hastens to a port of safety, and then drops his anchor in the calm waters of the haven. The anchor descends below and grasps the solid earth, and holds the vessel fast amid the raging of the wind and the darkness of the sky. It resembles hope in its retentive capacity, which, amid winds of doctrine, failure of some who go back and walk no more with Christ, temptations from the world, the flesh, and the devil, keeps the believer from leaving his position and surrendering his profession of the gospel. The thought of the anchor is qualified by the connection of our hope with heaven, which our Lord has entered. It attaches itself to him who has entered as the Forerunner. Here we note a striking and glorious difference between the high priest of the temple and the office of the Redeemer. The Aaronic high priest had no one with him in the holiest of all, and stood and ministered in awful solitude before God. Our Lord is the Forerunner, and awaits the arrival of his followers. He is the Captain of salvation, who will bring many sons into glory; for he is a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, who, as a sublime type of the Lord Jesus, is presented to our consideration in the following chapter.—B.

I. Vers. 1—3.—*Pressing forward to the end.* It is obvious that the two leading words of this passage are those respectively rendered "principles" and "perfection." They indicate the beginning and the end. Every right ἀρχή looks forward, as a matter of course, to a τελειότης; and every true τελειότης, when looked into, reveals a right ἀρχή. Hence we have—

I. THE RIGHT STARTING-POINT. Presuming that perfection is wanted, we must start rightly; and there is here indicated, somewhat in detail, what that right start is. True, there is to us some obscurity in the detail. We cannot be sure of the exact meaning of each of the expressions, but of the great general drift there can be no doubt. The Hebrew had been for centuries in expectation of the Christ. The beginning of the Christ was really an immemorial thing. The Anointed of God, bringing in his train all good things, had been proclaimed by Divine messengers and accepted by the people. And here in these details, called a foundation, are set forth the acts showing the acceptance of the Christ. Note how these details can be classified. There is what we turn *from*, and what we turn *toward*. In the proclamation of the Christ a summons to repentance was always implied. Turn away from dead works. Works of the hand, and not of the heart, were superstitious externalities. But if a man is to turn away effectively from useless endeavours, he must have some definite point to which to turn. And so there is the mention of trust in God as well as repentance. These are the two really important points in considering the start of a man's connection with Christ. Promptly, decidedly, and from the heart, he must forsake *dead* works; and in the same spirit he must trust in the *living* God.

II. THE CONTINUAL AIM. Completeness as an actual thing must ever be before the mind. "Onward and upward" is the burden of the New Testament everywhere.

Foundations are laid that buildings may be erected on them, story climbing above story, till at last, roofed and furnished, they are ready for habitation and use. Very hard work was it to get these Hebrews to see how the old dispensation was only the foundation of the new. They did not like to lose sight of familiar institutions and symbols. But in this they were very much like the man who should keep to childish things. Jesus himself had his time of initiation. He needed not to repent from any dead works, yet he came to John to be baptized along with the sinning, repentant crowd. And when he had entered on his work, with what steadiness he went on! There was no standing still. Every day not only brought him nearer in time to the accomplishment of his decease at Jerusalem, but fitted him for that accomplishment; and so he was able to say, "It is finished." The peril in our case is that we shall go on and on, and when the time comes that we also should say, "It is finished," there will be nothing to show but foundations. And if foundations are foundations and nothing more, then they are really not even foundations. They are but melancholy bits of waste, on which is written, "This man began to build, and was not able to finish."—Y.

VER. 4—6.—*The critical state of backsliders.* Passages like this we naturally avoid. There is reluctance to face its difficulties. We dread lest a hasty admission of certain premises may lead us to terrible conclusions. But since backsliding, falling away, is a melancholy reality among believers, it is above all things needful that the possible results of backsliding should be considered. The backslider's present condition we know; but one thing we may not distinctly apprehend until it is pressed upon us by solemn utterance of the Holy Spirit, and that is the future into which the present may lead.

I. THE BACKSLIDER, IN FALLING AWAY, HAS FALLEN FROM EXCEEDING GREAT PRIVILEGES. He who was enlightened by a great steady light, shining on him once for all, has yet fallen back into practical darkness. He is not in darkness because the light has gone, but because he has shut it more and more from the inward eye. The light is there, more and more rejoiced in by persevering believers, but he has become willingly negligent of the benefits. The free, peculiar gift of Heaven, Jesus Christ himself, once accepted, is now despised. The Holy Spirit of God, the great Pentecostal communication dwelling with the backslider, is yet shut out from the sympathies of his heart. Renewing and sanctifying work has ceased. The good Word of God, heavenly truth, heavenly promises, all that God has given as daily bread for the hungering inward life, all that shows how man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word proceeding out of the mouth of God,—all this has lost its relish. The powers of the age to come, so much greater than any powers of the present age, are little by little left unused. We have an actual instance of the backslider in Demas. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." Demas had been put in the midst of heavenly light and heavenly food—nay, more; he was in the companionship of one who had received all these heavenly things to the full, and profited by them as much as any man ever profited. It is not a little treasure from which the backslider turns, under the dominion of carnal affections.

II. THE GREAT PROOF THEREBY AFFORDED OF HUMAN WEAKNESS. The theory of many is that if good things be put before a man he is sure at last to welcome them to his heart, and get all that they have to give, even to their innermost influences. But the fact for which God's Spirit would ever prepare us is that this present world is an object very fascinating. These glorious gifts of God in Christ Jesus mean that we must persevere in an arduous and lengthened effort to get at their fulness. The backslider is one who does not trouble to pierce the phenomena of grace, and so lay hold of the spiritual realities. He forgets his weakness, or rather he does not rightly believe how weak he is. Here is a new meaning of the saying, that when we are weak then we are strong; for, knowing our weakness, we distrust ourselves, and keep ourselves open to the inflowing of God.

III. THE GROUNDS OF HOPE THAT LIE HIDDEN IN THIS PASSAGE. It is impossible to renew the backslider again to repentance. So the passage plainly says; and if we take it in isolation and in bald literalness, it gives the backslider but a poor prospect. And yet the backslider is the very one who needs encouragement. We must not, therefore, let this word "impossible" so fill the field of thought as to exclude the most hopeful

considerations. Jesus said it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into the kingdom of heaven. But it is impossible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. Therefore it is impossible for a rich man to get into the kingdom of heaven. It must be distinctly put before the mind what a barrier worldly possessions are; and then the hope-inspiring word comes in, "With God all things are possible." Yea, with God it is possible to turn the backslider into the right way again, and set him forward with a recovered love and a strengthened heart. We do not know but what Demas came back again, and furnished in the end a crowning proof of how great are the powers of the world to come.—Y.

Vers. 7, 8.—*Teaching from the good land and the bad.* Here is a reminiscence of the parable of the seed in the four kinds of ground. The soil becomes invested with a kind of personality. One thinks, too, of that fig tree which the Lord withered up. And it may not be so entirely fanciful, as at first it appears to give land a sort of individuality; so that one piece of soil will behave in one way, and another in another. If, for instance, there be any real basis for the reputation attaching to certain vintages, it must come from some indefinable quality of soil. At any rate, we can imagine two different kinds of land, such as are set before us in this passage.

I. We are to imagine TWO MEN PUT INTO EXACTLY SIMILAR POSITIONS WITH REGARD TO THE BENEFITS OF DIVINE GRACE. Just as two contiguous pieces of land have the same copious showers falling on them, so two men may come under the same religious influences. There may, perhaps, be peculiar spiritual advantages in one district which are lacking in another, though even so much as this has to be said guardedly; for we must believe that in the end all men shall have enough light to throw upon them the responsibility of neglecting salvation. But one thing we do see, that men, so far as we can judge, under the same spiritual influences, meet those influences in quite different ways. One is attentive, the other negligent. One is receptive, the other unresponsive. Nay, as the illustration puts it, both may be receptive, but differently receptive, so that there are very different ultimate results. The earth is represented as *drinking* in the oft-recurring showers. One man drinks in the grace and truth of God so that they energize all the powers of his heart, and he puts forth corresponding fruit. Another drinks in God's truth, seems to appreciate it, but when the result is looked for nothing comes but noxious growths.

II. THE DECLARATION OF RESPONSIBILITY AND CORRESPONDING JUDGMENT. If one man is fruitful of good works, and another fruitful only of evil ones, then God will treat the men correspondingly. Compare with the illustration here, the parable of the talents. God is not arbitrary. It is we who determine how God shall treat us ultimately, for he treats men on great eternal principles. It is for men to be wise and diligent in time, and recognize the principles. It is sometimes asked why thorns and briars and wasting weeds have ever had existence. The answer may be that these were first of all made to be illustrations to men. Thorns and briars are burnt without hesitation, that the very seeds and germs of them may, if possible, be blotted out of existence. And if men will put out from their lives—from lives that have been so divinely blessed—nothing but thorny and briery products, then they must expect these to be for burning. All evil things must perish. Our folly is in building up the evil which must go, rather than the good which will remain.—Y.

Vers. 9—12.—*Great attention needed to maintain the Christian's hope.* I. THE WRITER'S TONE OF AFFECTIONATE SOLICITUDE. He who has twice addressed his readers as *brethren*, now calls them *beloved*. His affection is hitherto implied; now it needs for a moment to be asserted; and the *brotherhood* must also be borne in mind, though not asserted. The readers of the Epistle might ask, "Why does this man lecture us so, calling us *fool*, and exhibiting to us such dreadful possibilities of disaster?" The answer is that he does it all in true brotherly affection. The word pointing to *safety* and completeness must be spoken in time. Faithful are the wounds of a friend.

II. HIS WORDS OF HOPE AND CONFIDENCE. These people are in a state by no means satisfactory so far as Christian hope and aspiration are concerned, lingering among the beginnings instead of growing in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. But such people ought always to be approached in a conciliatory and encouraging spirit.

The writer feels he has good ground for saying that the doom of the land bringing forth thorns and briers will not be theirs. He can see in them better things—things that belong to safety, not to destruction. Mark how the spirit of Christianity is never a fault-finding spirit. This has to be noticed all the more because the Spirit of God has to find so many faults in men—in the Christian, as a rule, more than others. But wherever there is good it is recognized and appreciated. Thus Paul, who had so many hard things to say to the Church at Corinth, begins by thanking God that this same Church came behind in no gift. The bright, the creditable, the hopeful side must always be looked at. Then rebukes and warnings from an evidently pure motive will come with increased force. Notice, too, *the ground for this hope*. These people are genuine enough so far as the spirit of practical beneficence is concerned. There is love in their hearts towards God and Christian people. They have ministered, not without toil, to the wants of the saints; nor are they weary in well-doing, for they are ministering still. How could a Christian brother speak to any such save in a large-hearted spirit of hope?

III. THE NEED OF A DILIGENT REGARD TO THE CHRISTIAN'S DESTINY. We may minister to saints and yet not be in full sympathy with them. He who ministers to the saints does a good thing as far as he goes; but the pity is that very often he is ministering to those who have a far brighter hope than any he has. There are many loving-hearted, generous people in the world who are not Christians, who do not profess to know the Christian's repentance, the Christian's faith, the Christian's hope; and in the particular case here dealt with there is the curious contradiction of a Christian life existing as far as beneficence is concerned, but paralyzed as it were in the element of hope. Now, here is one sign of a normal, healthy Christian life, namely, that it is moving under the full assurance of hope. We should be looking forward, with a constant certainty of feeling, to the glories, the blessedness, and the perfection which await us. And this hope is only to come by activity of heart according to the will of God. If there is interest in Divine truth, increasing spiritual-mindedness, more power to discriminate between the temporal and eternal, the seen and the unseen, the outward man and the inward man, then hope will grow. A reasonably hopeful spirit is the sure result of fidelity, prayerfulness, insight into the purpose of the work of Christ; and the writer of this Epistle evidently felt that to be without this special Christian hopefulness was to be in a position, not only of loss and suffering, but even of peril unspeakable.—Y.

Ver. 12.—*Imitation of those who inherit the promises*. I. THOSE WHO ARE TO BE IMITATED. "Followers" they are called in our version, but they are followers in that particular respect which is known as imitation. And if we are to imitate, we must have some distinct and sufficient view of those whom we imitate. Abraham is singled out here, and truly there could be no better example of the firm believer in God's promises. We have him receiving those promises, acting upon them as real messages coming from a veracious Being; excluding from his life any natural purposes of his own, and becoming the willing and docile agent of the purposes of God. But, after all, he is only one. Wherever we see any one who has grasped a promise of God, feeling all that there is of authority and supreme importance in it, there we look for the habit of faith, there we shall find a long-suffering endurance of the consequent trials. When a man goes forth under some deep conviction, we must trace that conviction to its practical result, and see what comes of it; for only so shall we know that he was not believing a lie. In other words, we must see the man believing, the man long-suffering, the man inheriting the promises.

II. WHY WE ARE TO IMITATE. Because promises are made to us also. This was what so grieved and alarmed the writer of the Epistle, that he saw his friends indifferent to the promises made to them. It is worth our while to search the New Testament through and see how it abounds in promises. Now, these promises must have stood very conspicuously before these apostles—these men who in the first days of the gospel had such peculiar authority to proclaim and enforce the essential elements of the Divine message. Hence the uncompromising, searching way in which the writer here presses a duty home. It is the same God who in Christ Jesus makes promises to us, who made promises so solemnly to Abraham of old. We have much need to study the

course of such men as Abraham and Moses; for one day we shall be asked as to our treatment of the promises made to us in common with all who have come to know the New Testament Scriptures. Moreover, it will be asked why we so neglected to consider the inheritors of the promises.

III. *HOW WE ARE TO IMITATE.* By showing in our lives the same qualities as those which brought the inheritors of the promises to their inheritance. God keeps his promises to those who can believe and wait. God said after the Flood, "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest shall not cease." But this very promise implied that men would have faith to sow the seed and patience to wait for the harvest. Here we are shown what God means by imitation. It is not copying outward appearance, but taking into the heart inward principles, which, if we only encourage them to take root and get fast hold, will show themselves more and more, keeping to the fulfilment of the promises. God's truth stands before us, exhibited in manifold ways, solemnly, lovingly, repeatedly. The first question is—Can we believe it? and the second—Can we wait God's time for him to make his righteousness clear as the light? God is true; the corresponding attitude on our part is to believe ever more deeply. God is loving and gracious; the corresponding attitude on our part is to wait as serenely and hopefully as we can.—Y.

Vers. 17—20.—*The anchor of the soul.* I. *MAN'S PERIL AND NEED.* This is set before us in the striking words, "fleeing for refuge." There is one sort of escape by getting simply out of bondage; there is another by reaching a place of perfect security. Many a bird has escaped from a cage only to become the prey of some wild bird or beast. It has not been able to attain a refuge. The need is further suggested by the word "anchor" (see Acts xxvii. 29). The shipmen fear lest the ship will fall on the rocks, and so they flee to the anchors, of which they cast out four. There is the need of *security*; need of solid holding-ground for the anchor; need of an anchor which itself will not give way. Vain is the anchor without the anchorage; vain the anchorage without the anchor. Anchor itself, and cable, and connection with the ground, and connection with the ship,—all these must be seen to. Moreover, there is needed a *calm sense of being in the right way*; a composing assurance that when the anchor is thrown into the water and disappears it will find a hold. We need the strong *παράκλησις*. We need to have a Divine power pressing on our hearts the right thing to do; to take from us all uncertainty, vacillation, trimming, yielding to plausible criticism from others. We need a calm, intelligent, apt use of the saving instruments which God puts into our hands. When sailors are out in mid-ocean they do not fling over the anchor; and when they are close to the rocks they do not behave as they would in mid-ocean.

II. *GOD'S SUPPLY FOR THE NEED.* Look first at the anchorage. We must not push the metaphor too far. The one great point in it is that it gives us such a clear illustration of what it is to find security in the invisible. The anchorage-ground is something unseen, and yet it gives a safety which is not to be found in anything that is seen. Indeed, the seen things are full of danger. There are the rocks; and the water in which the ship rests will not resist its progress towards them. And so our great hold and safety is to be in the invisible. We are to make sure of the reality of God's plan; that he has a plan, that it is a plan immutable; that it is indeed a plan of God, not subject to the collapse which come through human caprice, infirmity, and short-sightedness. Hence God announces and exhibits his plan through two immutable things. What are these? Surely one of them is the oath of God. We know that a man, always veracious and deliberate of speech, wants to be taken in an unusually serious way when he adds to what he has to say a solemn adjuration. And of course, when God speaks, his word is always serious; but he has his own way of calling man's attention to its seriousness. Then the other immutable thing is surely the priesthood, the Melchizedek priesthood of Jesus. Behind the veil constituted by the visible world there is a God who has sworn the solemn oath with respect to that inheritance which all inherit who by their faith are children of Abraham; and there also is the great High Priest, Jesus Christ, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." The anchorage thus being given, there is the anchor also to be considered. And here we are to consider the anchor, not so much as something which we fling into the

unseen, as something which out of the unseen is realized to us. It is as if, when a ship is drifting towards a dangerous shore, a beneficent hand should suddenly reach out of the waves and fling a rope to be fastened to the ship. Our great confidence, hope, and joy should be in this, that Jesus, vanished into the unseen, has still a living and active connection with a needy world. Note how full this whole passage is of strong words. Examine the passage in the original, and this will come out very clearly. Strong words in ordinary speech are too often the resort of weak men; but here they have to be used at every turn in order to set before us the stable anchorage and the solid, well-forged anchor which have been furnished to us by God himself.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PRIEST AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.

The exposition of Christ's heavenly priesthood is now at length taken up and carried out. It extends to ch. x. 19, forming the central part of the whole Epistle; and in the course of it is set forth also how the whole Jewish economy did in fact only prefigure and prepare for this one availing priesthood of the true High Priest of mankind. The peculiar thesis of ch. vii. is "after the order of Melchizedek," the question being—What is signified by this designation of the Messiah in the hundred and tenth psalm? The remarkable import of that psalm, in that it assigns priesthood as well as royalty to the Son, was noted under ch. v. 6. His being Priest at all implies a different order of royalty from that of the theocratic kings. But what further is meant by his priesthood being after the order, not of Aaron, but of Melchizedek? Is it that Melchizedek, being King of Salem as well as priest of the most high God, is therefore selected as the most suitable type of the great Priest-King to come? Yes; but there is more in it than this, as the writer goes on to show. To get at the full import of the expression in the psalm, he analyzes what we are told about Melchizedek in Gen. xiv. (the only other passage from which anything is known of him), and considers what could be meant in the psalm by "a priest after his order," and that "for ever." Both the actual history and the ideal of the psalm are in his view together; and from the two combined he deduces the intended idea of "a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

Bearing this in mind, we shall have no

need to understand anything implied as to Melchizedek himself beyond what we learn from Genesis. Some commentators, on the strength of what is here said of him, have supposed him to have been some superhuman being; and many theories have been propounded as to who and what he was. All such views have arisen from a misconception of our writer's drift; from regarding the representation of the ideal which Melchizedek typified as part of the account of what he actually was, the actual and the ideal being, in fact, somewhat blended in the exposition. That no more is implied about the man himself than what is recorded in Genesis may be concluded, not only from the purport (rightly understood) of the passage before us, but also from the analogy of the rest of the Epistle, throughout which the arguments are based on the contents of the Old Testament itself, as it was read and received by the Hebrew Christians. For example, neither David, nor Solomon, nor Isaiah are adduced as having been other than what the sacred record represents them to have been, though it is shown that what is said of them in the spirit of prophecy points to an ideal beyond them.

Vers. 1—3.—For this Melchizedek, King of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; to whom also Abraham divided a tenth part of all (this description belongs to the subject of the sentence, being merely a recapitulation of the facts recorded in Genesis, the language of the LXX. being used; what follows belongs properly to the predicate, being of the nature of a comment on the facts recorded); first, being by interpretation King of righteousness (which is the meaning of the name Melchizedek), and then also King of Salem, which is, King of peace (the very names of himself and his kingdom are significant (cf. Ps. lxxxv. 10; lxxii. 3; Isa. xxxii. 17;

Rom. v. 1; where righteousness and peace are the characteristics of the Messiah's kingdom): this significance, however, is not afterwards made a point of, being merely noticed by the way); without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. It is this language especially that has been supposed to involve something more than human about the historical Melchizedek. But we have only to enter into the mind of the writer to see that it is not so. For it is the ideal of the psalm, conceived as suggested by the historical type, that gives its colour to the language used. And, indeed, how strangely suggestive is that fragment about the priestly king (Gen. xiv. 18—21) so unexpectedly interposed in the life of Abraham! In the midst of a history in which such a point is made of the parentage and descent of the patriarchs of Israel, at a time of peculiar glory of the first and greatest of them, one suddenly appears on the scene, a priest and king, not of the peculiar race at all, his parentage and ancestry unrecorded and unknown, who blesses and receives tithes from Abraham, and then as suddenly disappears from view. We hear no more of him; as about his origin, so about his end, Scripture is silent. And so he "abides" before the mind's eye, apart from any before or after, the type of an unchanging priesthood. For the meaning of the word ἀγενεαλόγητος (in itself denoting the absence, not of ancestors, but of a traced genealogy), cf. ver. 6, ὁ δὲ μὴ γενεαλογούμενος ἐξ ἀβραάμ. That of ἀπόστορος, ἀμήτορος, is illustrated by the Latin expression, "Nullis majoribus ortus." On "made like (ὁμοιοῦμενος) unto the Son of God," Chrysostom says, "We know of no beginning or end in either case; in the one, because none are recorded; in the other, because they do not exist." The idea seems to be that Melchizedek is thus assimilated to Christ in the sacred record, by what it leaves untold no less than by what it tells. It is not said that he is like him (ὅμοιος), but made like (ὁμοιοῦμενος); i.e. represented in such wise as to resemble him. It may be here remarked that, though the term "Son of God" is used in the Epistle generally to denote the Messiah as manifested in time, his essential eternal being is here, as elsewhere, distinctly intimated; also that "the Son of God" is regarded as the archetype of the comparison: "Non dicitur Filius Dei assimilatus Melchizedeko, sed contra; nam Filius Dei est antiquior et archetypus" (Bengel).

Ver. 4.—Now consider how great this man was, unto whom Abraham, the patriarch, even gave a tenth of the spoils. The

typical significance of Melchizedek is now further seen in what passed between him and Abraham, in respect to tithe and blessing. Alford's inference, that *ἐπ' αὐτὸν ὄφειλε*, referring as it does, not to the antitype, but to the man himself, implies some mysterious greatness beyond what appears in the original record, does not follow. Of one who simply blessed and received tithes from the great patriarch, the expression is not too strong. Observe the emphatic position, at the end of the Greek sentence, of ὁ πατριάρχης, equivalent to "he, the patriarch." Abraham's being this, the father and representative of the chosen race, is what is shown in what follows to give peculiar significance to the transaction. The word ἀποθῆκη (properly, "the chief spoils"), which is not in the LXX., seems introduced to enhance the picture: "Quæ Abrahami proprie fuerant, ut victoris" (Bengel).

Vers. 5—7.—And they indeed of the sons of Levi who receive the office of priesthood have commandment to receive tithes of the people according to the Law, that is, of their brethren, though these have come out of the loins of Abraham: but he whose genealogy is not counted from them hath received tithes of Abraham. As much as to say, "Let it not be said that the tithing of Abraham by Melchizedek implies no higher priestly prerogative than the tithing of Abraham's descendants by the sons of Aaron; for there is this difference: They, in virtue only of a special ordinance of the Law, not of original right, were allowed to tithe their brethren,¹ though descended from the same great ancestor; he, though not of them or of the race at all, in virtue of his own inherent dignity, tithes the whole race as represented in its patriarch." (We observe how, in place of the aorist ἔδωκε, used when the mere historical incident was referred to, we have here the perfect δεδεκτώκε (as also ἐδέχθη in what follows, and δεδεκτώται in ver. 9), denoting a completed act, of which the effects and significance remain; Melchizedek, who represents the priesthood after his order, being viewed in permanent relation to Abraham, who represents the chosen race.) And hath blessed him that hath (i.e. the holder of) the promises. But, without all controversy, the less is blessed of the better. The superiority evidenced by be-

¹ There is no essential inaccuracy in what is said here with respect to the law of tithes, viz. that the priests received them from the people. The Levites, in fact, received them of the other tribes, and paid a tithe of their tithes to the priests (Numb. xvii. 24, 26—28; Neh. x. 38). The priests thus received them virtually from the people, though not directly at their hands.

stowal of blessing no less than by receiving of tithe having been thus noticed, the contrast with the Levitical priesthood is continued in the following verses.

Ver. 8.—And here (in the case of the Levitical priesthood) men that die (literally, *dying men*) receive tithes; but there (in the case of Melchizedek) one of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. The difference here noted is between a succession of mortal priests and one perpetually living, who never loses his personal claim, which is inherent in himself. But how so of Melchizedek? For it is to him, and not to Christ the Antitype, that the words evidently apply. Is it at length implied that he was more than mortal man? No, if only for this reason; that the witness appealed to (*μαρτυρούμενος*) must be that of Scripture, which nowhere bears such witness of the historical Melchizedek. The words, *μαρτυρούμενος ὅτι ζῇ*, are, in fact, only a resumption of what was said in ver. 3: "having neither beginning of days nor end of life;" and bear the same meaning; viz. (as above explained) that he passes before our view in Genesis with no mention of either death, birth, or ancestry, and thus presented the ideal of "a priest for ever" to the inspired psalmist. The witness referred to is that of the record in Genesis, viewed in the light of the idea of the psalm.

Vers. 9, 10.—And, so to say, through Abraham even Levi, who receiveth tithes, hath paid tithes. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedek met him. Or, in other words, "Nay, further, Melchizedek may be said to have tithed Levi himself and his priestly tribe." For, inasmuch as the whole position of Levi and his tribe, in the old dispensation, came by inheritance from the great patriarch who received the promises, the subordination of the patriarch to one above himself involved that of all who so inherited. It is not simply the physical descent of Levi from Abraham, but the peculiar position of the latter as "the patriarch," that justifies the assertion that Levi paid tithes through him. And thus, while we remember how Abraham is elsewhere viewed in Scripture as the representative of the chosen people, and also how the lives of individual patriarchs (notably so in the case of Jacob and Esau) are so told and referred to as to prefigure the positions and fortunes of the races they represent, we may recognize in this assertion no mere rabbinical fancy, but an interpretation true to the spirit of the Old Testament. Be it further observed that the original significance of Abraham's action as bearing upon his descendants is enhanced by the fact that, while it was *after* the receiving of the promise, it was *before* the birth of Isaac. He, and consequently his

descendant Levi, was yet (*ἔτι*) in the loins of Abraham; on which point, "Proles a parentis potestate egressa in suam venit tutelam: sed quoad in parentis potestate, imo in lumbis est, illius conditionem sequitur" (Bengel).

Vers. 11, 12.—If then perfection (*τελειώσις*: cf. *οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐτελείωσεν ὁ νόμος*) were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it (rather, upon it, on the ground of it) the people hath received the Law), what need was there that another (rather, a *different*) priest should rise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the Law. Here a further thought is introduced. So far the superiority of the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek to the Aaronic has been shown. The new thought is that the very mention in the psalm of a different order of priesthood implies that the old order, and with it the whole legal dispensation which depended on it, was imperfect and to be superseded. This is the general drift of vers. 11, 12, though the sequence of thought in their several clauses is not easy to follow. Ideas in the writer's mind, not expressed, seem necessary to be understood. In the parenthetical clause of ver. 11, *ἐν αὐτῇ* and *νομοθετήται* are decidedly to be preferred, on the ground of authority, to *ἐν αὐτῇ* and *νομοθετήται* of the Textus Receptus. The meaning of the clause (whatever be the precise thought connecting it with the sentence in which it stands) is that the whole Law rested on the institution of the priesthood; not the priests only, but the whole people (*ὁ λαός*), received their Law as grounded on it. On the same idea depends ver. 12, where it is said that a change of the priesthood involves of necessity a change of the Law.

The verses next following serve to remove all doubt that there is a complete change of the priesthood; the proofs being, not only the patent fact that the Messiah is of the tribe, not of Levi, but of Judah (vers. 13, 14), but also, for more abundant evidence of the Divine purpose, that significant utterance, again adduced, about his being after the order, not of Aaron, but of Melchizedek (vers. 15, 16, 17).

Vers. 13, 14.—For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to (*μετέχων*: literally, *hath partaken of*; cf. *μετέχε*, ch. ii. 14, with reference, as there, to Christ's assumption of humanity) another tribe, of which no man hath (ever) given attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah; as to which tribe

Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood (or priests; *ιερείων* being a better-supported reading than the Textus Receptus *ιεροσύνης*). This is spoken of as evident (i.e. plain to all, *πρόδηλον*), not only because of the well-known prophecies that the Messiah was to spring from David, but still more (as is shown by the perfect *ἀνατέλλει*, pointing to an accomplished fact, and by the expression, *ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν*) because Jesus, recognized by all Christians as the Messiah, was known to have so sprung. For it is to Christian believers, with whatever Jewish prejudices, not to unbelieving Jews, that the Epistle is addressed. It is important to observe that the Davidic descent of our Lord is spoken of as an acknowledged fact, not merely as an inference from prophecy. "We have here a most significant proof that the descent of Jesus from the tribe of Judah was a well and universally known fact before the destruction of Jerusalem" (Ebrard). "Illo igitur tempore nulla difficultate laborabat genealogia Jesu Christi: et hoc ipsum difficultatibus postea exortis abunde medetur" (Bengel). The verb *ἀνατέλλει* may have been specially suggested by the prophetic figure of the Branch from the root of Jesse (see Isa. xi. 1; and Zech. iii. 8; vi. 12, where the LXX. has *ἀνατελλή* for 'Branch': *Ἀνατελλή ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὀνομαζέσθων αὐτοῦ ἀνατελεῖ*); though the figure of the sunrise is more frequently meant by the word when applied to Christ's appearance (cf. Num. xxiv. 17; Isa. lx. 1; Mal. iv. 2; Luke i. 78).

Vers. 15—17.—And it is yet more abundantly evident (i.e. the proposition of ver. 12), if after the likeness of Melchizedek there ariseth another Priest, who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless (indissoluble) life. For it is testified (of him), Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. This is a resumption of what has been already seen, put so as to be effective for the present stage of the argument. The old priesthood, and consequently the Law, is changed and superseded, not only because the Priest of the new order of things is of the tribe of Judah, but still more evidently because his priesthood is witnessed to as being one of a different kind, and of a kind so much higher and diviner. It is evident that the Antitype of Melchizedek, the subject of the hundred and tenth psalm, rather than Melchizedek himself, suggests here the language used. (Observe the contrasts between *νομὸς* and *δύναμις*, *σαρκικῆς* and *καταλόγου*, *ἐντελής* and *ῥῆς*. The idea of ch. ix. 8—15 is in these few pregnant words briefly anticipated, after the manner of the Epistle.)

Vers. 18, 19.—For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before

for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof (for the Law made nothing perfect); but [there is on the other hand] a bringing in thereupon of a better hope, through which we draw nigh unto God. Such is certainly the construction of the sentence (not as in the A.V.); *οὐδὲν γὰρ*, etc., in ver. 19 being parenthetical, and *ἐκείνου ἀρχὴ* depending on *γίνεσθαι* in ver. 18. We have here the conclusion of the argument of the vers. 11—18, with a further expression of the inherent insufficiency of the Law, given as the reason of its supersession; reminding us of similar views of what the Law was worth frequent in St. Paul's Epistles (cf. Rom. vii. 8; Gal. iii. 10, etc.). The final clause, *ὅτι ἡς ἐγγί(σκει) τῷ Θεῷ*, leads directly up to the main subject in the writer's view, viz. the exposition of Christ's eternal priesthood. But two proofs are first to be given of Christ's priesthood being, unlike the Aaronic, thus eternally availing to bring us near to God. These proofs are to be found in the Divine oath which established it, and the expression, "for ever," in Pa. xc, once more adduced.

Vers. 20—22.—And inasmuch as not without an oath [properly, *swearing of an oath*, *ὀρκισμοῦ*] he was made priest: (for they indeed have been made priests without an oath; but he with an oath by him that saith unto him, Thou art a Priest for ever); by so much of a better covenant hath Jesus become surety. The significance of the Divine oath, in connection with the promise to Abraham, has been dwelt on above: the oath of Pa. cx. is here similarly referred to, as imitating a priesthood that rests on no mere temporary ordinance, but on the immutable Divine counsels. (Observe the first occurrence here of the word *διαθήκη*, introducing in the way of hint (as is usual in the Epistle) an idea to be afterwards expanded, as it is in ch. viii. and ix. The meaning of the word will be considered below.)

Vers. 23, 24.—And they indeed have been made priests many in number, because of being by death hindered from continuing. But he, because of his abiding for ever, hath his priesthood unchangeable. This second point of contrast has already been twice touched on—ver. 8, with respect to the claim to tithe; and ver. 16, with respect to the order of priesthood: here it is with especial reference to the eternal personality, and hence the perpetual and complete efficiency, of our one Priest. The repetitions are not tautological, having each time different bearings. The contrast here, as before, is between mortal men who succeed each other in the office of priesthood, and One who has the office inherent in himself for ever. The word *ἀντρέβατος* (translated "unchange-

able") is taken by some in an intransitive sense, as in margin of the A.V., *that doth not pass to another*, equivalent to ἀδιδόχον. This, however, is not the proper force of this late Greek word, nor does the sense of the passage of necessity require it.

Ver. 25.—Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. We again observe how, at the end of successive stages of the argument, thoughts to be enlarged on afterwards are brought in. Here it is the perpetual intercession of Christ before the heavenly mercy-seat. In the view of his office thus arrived at there is, in fact, a transition to the main subject set forth in the three chapters that follow; viz. the fulfilment in Christ of the ceremonial of the Law, and especially of the high priest's intercession on the Day of Atonement. And thus from Melchizedek the train of thought passes to the high priest. The type of the former has been sufficiently shown to be fulfilled in the *higher order* of Christ's priesthood; it is now to be shown how, being of such higher order, it is the antitype of the Aaronic priesthood too, accomplishing what it signified. Hence in ver. 26 the word "*high priest*" (ἀρχιερεὺς) is for the first time introduced, as the key-note of what is coming.

Summary of the foregoing argument.

- I. (ch. v. 1—11.) What does the Melchizedek priesthood of Ps. cx. signify?
 1. (vers. 1—4.) One not depending on human ancestry, and one for ever abiding.
 2. (vers. 4—11.) One of a higher order than that of Aaron; for:
 - (1) Melchizedek, being of a race apart, received tithes from Abraham the patriarch.
 - (2) This denotes a higher position than that of the Aaronic priests, who tithed their brethren of the same race with themselves, in virtue only of a special ordinance.
 - (3) The *blessing* of Abraham by Melchizedek is similarly significant.
 - (4) The idea of an ever-living priest with a right to tithe transcends that of the temporary claims of a succession of dying men.
 - (5) Levi himself virtually paid tithe to Melchizedek.
- II. (vers. 11—18.) The Aaronic priesthood, and with it the whole dispensation based upon it, is thus shown to have been imperfect and transitory; for:
 1. Otherwise a priesthood of another order would not have been spoken of in Ps. cx.

2. Which priesthood is evidently distinct from the Aaronic, our Lord being of the tribe, not of Levi, but of Judah.
3. What has been seen (vers. 5 and 8) as to the Melchizedek priesthood being not "after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life," makes this "more abundantly evident."

Conclusion (vers. 18—20). The Aaronic priesthood (being in itself unprofitable) is therefore now superseded by an availing one, "through which we draw nigh unto God."

III. (vers. 20—26.) Christ's priesthood is thus availing; for:

1. The Divine oath (Ps. cx.) established it, marking it as resting on the eternal Divine counsels.
2. It is (as shown by the same psalm) "unchangeable." The one Priest abides for ever.

Conclusion (ver. 25). We have, therefore, in him at last, a perfectly availing and eternal interceding High Priest.

Ver. 26.—For such a High Priest became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. Such a High Priest, it is said, for us was fitting. The same word *ἵκετε* was used in ch. ii. 10, where the humiliation of Christ was spoken of. It was there said that to make the Captain of our salvation perfect through suffering "became" God—was befitting to what we conceive of the Divine nature. It is now said that our High Priest's being such as is here described "became" us—was befitting to our state and needs. That he should be both human and superhuman was in all respects fitting—the one that he might be our sympathizing brother; the other that his intercession might avail. The further description of him in this verse is suggested by the qualifications of the Aaronic high priest, what they typified being realized in Christ. The high priest was by his consecration a holy person, *ἅγιος* (Lev. xxi. 6, 8, etc.); he bore on his mitre "*Holiness to the Lord*" (Exod. xxxix. 30); he must be without personal blemish (Lev. xxi. 17, etc.); he must keep himself continually from all ceremonial pollution (Lev. xxi. and xxii.); he must purify himself by a sacrifice for himself and by special ablutions before entering the holy of holies (Lev. xvi.); when there, he was conceived as in God's presence, apart from the world of sinners outside. Christ was not only *ἅγιος*, but *ἁγιος*, personally and inwardly holy (Christians in the New Testament are all called *ἅγιοι*, but not all *ἁγιοι*: for the use of which word, cf. Titus i. 8; Acts ii. 27; xiii. 34, where it is applied to Christ,

τὸν θεὸν σου: and Rev. xv. 4—xvi. 5, where it is applied to God as his special attribute, *ὅτι μόνος θεός*); Christ was actually free from evil (*ἁκατος*) and undefiled (*ἁμλντος*) by any contact of sin; and as such he has passed to God's actual presence (cf. *διελλάθοντα τοὺς ὁπαροὺς*, ch. iv. 14), separated for ever from the world of sinners.

Ver. 27.—Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once for all, when he offered up himself. The expression "daily" (*καθ' ἡμέραν*) is not in strictness applicable to the high priest, who did not offer the daily sacrifice. The reference throughout what follows being to the high priest's peculiar functions on the Day of Atonement, *κατ' ἐνιαυτόν* might have been expected. There are two tenable solutions: (1) that the daily offerings of the priests are regarded as made by the high priest, who represented the whole priesthood, on the principle, *qui facit per alios facit per se*; (2) that *καθ' ἡμέραν* (as is suggested by its position in the sentence) belongs not to *ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς*, but only to Christ: "who has no need daily, as the high priests have yearly:" for his intercession being perpetual, an offering on his part would be needed daily, if needed at all. This view is supported by the fact that the daily sacrifices are not spoken of in the Law as including a special one in the first place for the priest's own sin. "This he did." Did what? Offer for his own sins as well as for the people's? No; for, though it has been seen above (ch. v. 7) how the high priest's offering for himself might have its counterpart in the agony, the Sinless One cannot be said to have offered for sins of his own. And, besides, he having offered himself (*ἑαυτὸν ἀνενέγκας*), the offering could not be for himself. We must, therefore,

take "this he did" as referring only to the latter part of the preceding clause, while *ἑαυτὸν προσενέγκας* answers to the former part; or as implying generally, "did all that was needed for atonement."

Ver. 28.—For the Law maketh man high priests, having infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was after the Law, maketh the Son, perfected for evermore. With *man* (i.e. a succession of men; cf. ver. 8) having infirmity is contrasted the one Son, for ever perfected. The absence of the article before *υἱός* does not imply the meaning "a son;" the title denotes here, as throughout the Epistle, the peculiar Son of prophecy (see under ch. i. 1). There is here no denial of his complete humanity, though he is plainly regarded as more than man. Nor is his participation in human *ἀσθενεία*, in the sense explained under ch. v., denied. His implied freedom from it may mean either that he never had any inherent in himself, none due to personal imperfection, or that now, in his exalted state, he is altogether removed from it. In both these senses the implication is true; and both may be understood; but *τετελειωμένον* being here opposed to *ἐχούσας ἀσθενείαν* (as *υἱός* to *ἀνθρώπος*), the latter sense may be conceived to have been especially in the writer's mind. It is, in fact, our ever-living High Priest, interceding for us above, after passing through human experience, and after atonement completed, that is now being presented to our view. It is to be observed, lastly, that *τετελειωμένον* in this verse may be intended to bear, or at any rate to suggest, the special sense noted under ch. v. 9, and strenuously maintained by Jackson, and hence to be not incorrectly rendered by "consecrated" in the A.V.; and this notwithstanding Alford's protest against this rendering as "obliterating both sense and analogy with ch. ii. 10 and v. 1."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—10.—*Melchizedek*. The author here returns from his long digression, and enters upon the central theme of the treatise.

I. WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT MELCHIZEDEK. (Vers. 1—3.) 1. *As a man*. (1) *From Scripture statements*. (Vers. 1, 2.) All that the sacred historian records of him is contained in three verses (Gen. xiv. 18—20). Yet we read in these, as in the passage before us, of Melchizedek's illustrious personality, his twofold office, his double designation, his sudden appearance, his priestly blessing, and of Abraham's acknowledgment of his dignity. (2) *From Scripture silence*. (Ver. 3.) It is evident that the writer believed the Old Testament to be inspired, not merely in its general drift, but also in its minutest details. He is persuaded that even the omissions from the narrative had been arranged by the Holy Spirit. From this passage, therefore, we learn our duty, not only to survey the Bible in its broad landscapes of truth, and to study its general structure as the literary record of a supernatural revelation, but, alongside of that, to subject individual passages, as we have opportunity, to microscopic analysis. The omissions about Melchizedek are so important that ver. 3 reads almost like a riddle.

Such omissions respecting a personage so exalted are contrary to Oriental custom. The points which the Holy Spirit has studiously concealed about Melchizedek are—his personal parentage, his priestly pedigree, and the dates of his birth and death. 2. *As a type.* (Ver. 3.) The brief notice of Melchizedek in the Book of Genesis has been framed so as to exhibit in him as striking as possible a prefiguration of Christ. Melchizedek was "made like unto the Son of God," at once in the events of his personal career, and in the shape given to the Bible narrative respecting him. The Lord Jesus Christ is both "King of righteousness" and "King of peace;" he dispenses spiritual peace upon a basis of righteousness. He is a royal Priest, wearing both the mitre and the diadem. He had no predecessor in his office, and he shall have no successor. His priesthood is of older date, and of superior dignity to that of Levi. In all these respects Melchizedek was a type of Christ.

II. THE SUPERIORITY OF MELCHIZEDEK'S PRIESTHOOD TO THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD. (Vers. 4—10.) "Consider" this, says the apostle. Although the theme is recondite, and "hard of interpretation" (ch. v. 11), it deserves careful study, since it concerns the dignity and glory of the Son of God (Ps. cx. 4). 1. *Melchizedek is superior to Abraham, the ancestor of the Levites.* (Vers. 4—7.) No Old Testament name is more illustrious than that of "Abraham, the patriarch;" no heraldic escutcheon could boast marks of greater honour than that which bears the arms of "the father of the faithful"—"the friend of God." Yet we see this venerated founder of the Hebrew nation humbly acknowledging the superiority of Melchizedek. (1) Abraham paid tithes to him (vers. 4—6). Under the Levitical law tithes were due from the people to the priests, priests and people being brethren by race; but here we have a Gentile pontiff receiving tithes from Abraham, the patriarch offering them spontaneously. (2) Melchizedek pronounced a blessing upon Abraham (vers. 6, 7). This also implied Abraham's spiritual inferiority. The head of the chosen nation, to whom God had given "the promises," stood humbly before this Hamite priest to receive his blessing. 2. *The Levitical priests were dying men; Melchizedek appears only as a living priest.* (Ver. 8.) Aaron's sons obtained the sacerdotal dignity by descent; they died and succeeded one another. But Melchizedek's priesthood was inherent and undervied. He is exhibited on the inspired page only as a living priest, in order that his office may the more suitably prefigure the intransferable priesthood of Christ. 3. *The Levitical priests virtually paid tithes to Melchizedek.* (Vers. 9, 10.) All the sacred honour with which Aaron and his sons were invested was derived from Abraham, as the head of the nation; and so, when Abraham confessed the religious superiority of Melchizedek, the long line of Aaronical priests may in a sense be said to have done so also.

Learn in conclusion: 1. The unparalleled majesty and glory of the Lord Jesus. Abraham was greater than Aaron; Melchizedek was greater than Abraham; but Christ is infinitely greater than Melchizedek. 2. Christ's priestly benediction is more efficacious than that of Melchizedek. He has been sent "to bless us, in turning away every one of us from our iniquities" (Acts iii. 26). 3. If Abraham gave Melchizedek a tithe of the spoils, should not we dedicate to the Lord Jesus Christ, not our tithes only, but our all?

Vers. 11—28.—*Christ greater than Aaron.* This passage is really just a commentary on the Old Testament oracle contained in Ps. cx. 4. There might appropriately be prefixed to it as a motto the words, "Behold, a greater than Aaron is here."

I. THE IMPERFECTION OF THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD. (Vers. 11—19.) Aaron's mediation could not satisfy justice, or pacify conscience, or sanctify the heart. All that it could do was to exhibit a faint adumbration of the ideal priesthood. The words of Ps. cx. 4 suggest this insufficiency, for they contain the promise of the Messianic priesthood. 1. *Jesus was of other descent.* (Vers. 11—14.) He belonged to the tribe of Judah; and not, like Aaron's sons, to the ecclesiastical tribe of Levi. The fact of this change in itself proves the inefficacy of the hereditary Hebrew priesthood. 2. *His priesthood is of everlasting duration.* (Vers. 15—17.) The Jewish priests one by one succumbed to death; but Jesus Christ is himself "the Life." Life resides essentially and originally in him. So his priesthood is abiding; his official dignity remains "for ever." From this it follows (vers. 18, 19) that the Levitical priesthood, and the entire ceremonial law which enshrined it, have been abrogated; and in their stead has come

the introduction of "a better hope"—the hope of an efficient priesthood, of a dispensation both spiritual and permanent, and thus of immediate and perfect access to God.

II. THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD TO THE LEVITICAL. (Vers. 20—28.) Jesus is the true Priest of mankind, for whom the nations have been waiting. He is the Apostle of God to men, and the prevailing Intercessor with God for men. This passage reminds us how infinitely exalted his priesthood is above that of Aaron. 1. *He was consecrated with an oath.* (Vers. 20—22.) No Levitical priest was installed thus solemnly. The Divine oath shows the certainty and importance and immutability of the thing sworn. It reminds us that the priesthood of our Lord enters into the very substance of the everlasting covenant. 2. *His priesthood is intransferable.* (Vers. 23—25.) The Levitical priesthood had this defect, that it required to be conveyed from one man to another. But, although Christ died, his death did not "hinder him from continuing;" it did not even temporarily interrupt the exercise of his priesthood. For he died voluntarily. He laid himself as Victim upon the altar. And, by dying, he conquered death, through the power of his indissoluble life. So, his mediatorial authority is intransferable. 3. *His character is holy.* (Ver. 26.) The Levitical priests had "infirmity," and needed to offer sacrifices first for their own sins. Even the most pious men among them had been, of course, morally imperfect; and some of the high priests—such as Caiaphas—who were not godly men, had been notorious for their wickedness. But "the High Priest of our confession" has a pure nature. He lived on earth a stainless life. He was "separated from sinners;" i.e. he showed on every side of his character that he belonged to another category than that of sinners. And his spotless holiness was in the fullest harmony with our spiritual need; it was, indeed, indispensably necessary, and in every way most "becoming" and beautiful, in relation to us. 4. *His sacrifice is perfect.* (Vers. 27, 28.) The Jewish priests had to offer up sacrifices "daily"—"the same sacrifices year by year"—with laborious and wearisome iteration. But the one sacrifice of Christ is in itself all-sufficient to expiate guilt, cleanse the conscience, and purify the soul. His blood has virtue to atone, for it is the blood of God. 5. *He ministers in the real sanctuary.* (Vers. 26, 28.) Aaron's ministry was carried on in a moving tent of curtain-work and wood-work—a tent, too, which seems to have had no pavement but the naked ground. His successors, likewise, served in what was at best a perishable "sanctuary of this world." But Jesus now ministers in "heaven itself," the most holy place of the new covenant. (The apostle emphasizes this point in ch. viii. 1—6.)

In conclusion, let us reflect upon this central thought of the passage—the immortal heavenly life of our High Priest. He is a Divine person; and his Divine nature is the basis of his "endless life." Hence the perfection of his power to save.

Ver. 25.—*Salvation to the uttermost.* The chief point in this verse is "our High Priest's ability to save, and the guarantee which his perpetual intercession affords regarding that ability. What does this continual intercession certify? Four things.

I. HE HAS THE ABILITY OF MERIT. The Saviour's merit arises from what he is, from what he became, and from what he has done. His intercession is just a continual development of the exhaustless efficacy of his life-work. Our Priest is the eternal Son of God clothed in human nature. His work on earth was both active and passive: he obeyed and he suffered. He perfectly fulfilled the Law, and he fully endured the penalty due to our disobedience. Upon the union of this doing and dying the great structure of our Intercessor's ability of merit is sustained. The infinitude of his Divine nature invests his offering with boundless value. By his "obedience unto death" he sheathed the sword of justice in the heart of mercy. And, when he had done this, he went boldly up to heaven, sprinkled the golden altar there with his blood, and took his place in the midst of the throne. The fact of his intercession as our risen and glorified Saviour shows that the satisfaction which he has made for sin is perfect.

II. HE HAS THE ABILITY OF RIGHT. A true priest must receive his appointment from God. So, our Lord's session at the right hand of the Father is in itself an evidence of the validity of his intercession. We know, however, that God appointed him to his office with a solemn oath (Ps. cx. 4). He said to him, on the day when he

constituted him Priest-King, "Ask of me" (Ps. ii. 8), thus expressly authorizing his intercession. We cannot fathom the mystery of the atonement; but it is enough to know that Christ's sacred blood was shed for our salvation by Divine appointment; and we are persuaded that, had it not possessed merit enough for its purpose, it would never have been shed at all. Jesus sits upon his priestly throne, and does his priestly work, by Divine right.

III. HE HAS THE ABILITY OF INFLUENCE. He possesses not only merit and right, but also power. He is "a Priest upon his throne." And it was more than a mere external statute that set him there. Christ is our Intercessor in virtue of "the power of an endless life." These words are emphatic, "He ever liveth." He conducts our cause in heaven, as our Advocate, in the strength of the imperishable life which he has possessed from eternity. Enthroned in glory, he has yet power upon earth, for he has sent down to us his Holy Spirit. This gift is the direct fruit of his sacrifice and intercession. While the Saviour intercedes without us, his Spirit intercedes within us. The work of the "other Paraclete" is complementary of that of the first. The Holy Ghost within our minds and hearts bestows all the communications of grace, and conducts all the preparations for glory; but he does so as the agent of the Lord Jesus, and his work is dependent upon our High Priest's constant pleadings at the bar of God.

IV. HE HAS THE ABILITY OF SYMPATHY. Even as God, the Saviour can sympathize with us; for our nature was formed in the likeness of our Maker, so that man belongs to the same order of being as God himself. But our necessities demanded more than the sympathy of God. How sweet, then, to remember that our High Priest is also a man! He is a woman's Son, and therefore in a true sense one of ourselves. His earthly life was full of experiences substantially the same as ours; so that he knows our difficulties and sorrows and temptations. He is careful to adapt his perpetual intercessions to the currents of individual experience. Believers can approach him with confidence in the spirit of the exquisite lines—

"Thou our throbbing flesh hast worn,
Thou our mortal griefs hast borne,
Thou hast shed the human tear:
Gracious Son of Mary, hear!"

(Milman.)

Amidst his unparalleled exaltation, the Man Christ Jesus does not forget the humblest of his people. Our High Priest has every name that is dear to him engraven upon his breastplate—written upon the imperishable tablet of his loving heart.

CONCLUSION. 1. Let us retain Jesus as our Advocate. 2. Let us tell him our whole case, and commit it unreservedly into his hands. 3. Let us be sure of his ability successfully to plead the cause of his clients.

Ver. 26.—*Separated from sinners.* This verse exhibits in a strong clear light the moral purity of our High Priest, and its becomingness in relation to the necessities of his people.

I. THE HOLINESS OF CHRIST. He was born without entail of birth-sin. His boyhood and youth were stainless. His manhood was one of sinless perfection. His friends regarded him as faultless. His enemies testified to his purity (Pilate, Judas, the devils whom he cast out). Jesus himself claimed to be holy (John viii. 46; xiv. 30); and he never confessed sin, or begged forgiveness. The voice of his Father from heaven attested him, once and again, to be the Holy One of God (Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5). Notice: 1. *The elements of his holiness.* Three adjectives are used, referring to three different departments of moral character. (1) "Holy," i.e. pious in relation to God. Jesus lived the life of ideal godliness. He perfectly obeyed "the great and first commandment"—the four "words" of the first table of the Law. (2) "Guileless," i.e. just and kind towards his fellow-men. Jesus perfectly observed the six precepts of the second table. He injured no one. He "went about doing good." (3) "Undefiled," i.e. personally pure; uncontaminated by his constant contact with sinful men; holy in the midst of sin, temptation, and suffering. 2. *The singularity of his holiness.* "Separated from sinners." This phrase sustains a relation of contrast to the three adjectives. It indicates the unique character and the matchless harmony of

the Saviour's moral life. It expresses his solitariness in his holiness. If the human race be divided into two classes—the sinners and the holy—all the rest of mankind must take rank as sinners, while Jesus stands by himself as the one human being who was holy. 3. *The reward of his holiness.* "Made higher than the heavens." His supreme exaltation has set him more visibly apart from other men than before. It was conferred upon him as the reward of his pure, unworldly, self-sacrificing life. His mediatorial throne has been erected in the new heavens of the new covenant, and these are higher than any heavens formerly known to mankind.

II. THE NECESSITY OF CHRIST'S HOLINESS IN RELATION TO OUR SALVATION. "Such a High Priest became us." In ch. ii. 10 we read of what in this connection "became" God; here, of what "became" man. The purity of the Redeemer was admirably adapted to the necessities of our condition. 1. *That he might be a true manifestation of God.* A priest is a mediator or middle-man between God and men; and it is indispensable that he should be in perfect sympathy with the purity of the Eternal. Holiness is the crown and flower of the Divine perfections; and it was needful that our priest should reflect that holiness in his own character. 2. *That his sacrifice might be an adequate atonement for sin.* He must be on the very best of terms with the God whom we have offended. His expiation must be satisfactory to Divine justice. It is impossible that Jesus could have atoned for us had he been himself morally infirm, like the Jewish high priest. He could only purchase our reconciliation by offering himself as a Victim, without spot or blemish, upon the altar. 3. *That he might leave us a perfect example.* The Christian life consists in the imitation of Christ. Believers follow him in the three great departments of moral excellence in which he was so absolutely pure. We ought to copy him also in his separatedness from the world. Indeed, his people should already be in spirit, through their oneness of character with their risen Lord, "made higher than the heavens."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*Melchizedek a type of Christ.* "For this Melchizedek, King of Salem," etc. The various extraordinary conjectures as to the personality of Melchizedek "we may safely treat as fanciful and unneeded. The typology connected with Melchizedek does not require that he himself should be regarded as any superhuman person, but merely exalts the human circumstances under which he appears into symbols of superhuman things. Everything combines to show that Melchizedek was a Canaanitish king who had retained the worship of the true God and combined in his own person the offices of king and priest."¹ And the statements made concerning him in the third verse of our text need not cause us any difficulty. The Levitical priests held their office by virtue of their descent from Levi and Aaron. A clear and unquestionable genealogy was of the utmost importance to them. On the return of the Jews from captivity certain persons were excluded from the priesthood because they could not produce their pedigree (Ezra ii. 61—63). Now, as for Melchizedek, the names of his parents were unknown, his name was not mentioned in the Hebrew genealogies, there was no record of his birth or of his death, and no mention of the termination of his priesthood. "He comes forth from the darkness like a streak of light, only to disappear immediately in the darkness again." He is mentioned in our text as a type of Jesus Christ.

I. IN HIS REGAL CHARACTER AND FUNCTIONS. "Melchizedek, King of Salem . . . by interpretation King of righteousness, and King of peace." In the reign of the Christ: 1. *Righteousness is the firm basis of peace.* It is true in government as in other things that "the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle." Stable peace is impossible apart from righteousness. Deep craft, subtle diplomacy, strong naval and military forces, are miserable guarantees for a nation's peace. The peace and the perpetuity of the reign of Messiah are founded upon its truth and righteousness. The witness of Scripture to this is most clear and conclusive (see Ps. lxxii. 1—7; Isa. ii. 4; xl. 1—9; xxxii. 17). 2. *Righteousness is joined with peace.* Both these qualities characterize his administration. Righteousness is firm, inflexible, almost

¹ Alford on Gen. xiv. 18—20.

stern; peace is mild, merciful, gentle. In the kingdom of our Lord "mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other."

II. IN HIS SACERDOTAL CHARACTER AND FUNCTIONS. Here are several points of analogy. 1. *In the authority of his priesthood.* "Melchizedek, priest of God Most High . . . without father, without mother," etc. He was not a priest because he was descended from priests, like the sons of Aaron. He received his priesthood direct from God. It was based upon character, not upon pedigree. It was "an independent priesthood, having its root in his own person." Even so was the priesthood of our Lord and Saviour (cf. vers. 13—17; ch. v. 4—6). 2. *In the blessings which he bestowed.* Melchizedek bestowed upon Abraham a double blessing, and in each portion of it he prefigures the Christ. (1) He ministered to his physical needs. "Melchizedek met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings," and "brought forth bread and wine" unto him; bread representing the necessary food of the physical life, and wine representing the delights of life—"wine that maketh glad the heart of man." And our Lord cared for the physical needs of men. He had compassion on the hungry thousands, and fed them; he pitied the afflicted, and healed them; he sympathized with their social pleasures, and contributed to them by turning water into wine. (2) Melchizedek blessed Abraham spiritually (Gen. xiv. 19, 20). Our Lord confers the richest spiritual favours upon those who believe in him. The redemption of Jesus Christ is for the whole of man's nature. It is noteworthy that Melchizedek blessed the greatest and best man of his age of whom we have any record. He "blessed him that hath the promises," etc. (vers. 6, 7). Our Lord blesses the highest and holiest as well as the lowest and most sinful of men. None are so great or so good as to have outgrown the need of his blessing. 3. *In the homage which he received.* "To whom Abraham divided a tenth part of all . . . unto whom Abraham gave a tenth out of the chief spoils." He did this either as an act of homage to him as a king, and as placing himself under his authority and protection, or as an acknowledgment of his character and position as "priest of God Most High." To our Priest and King the mightiest and the weakest, the greatest and the smallest, high and low, rich and poor, shall pay heartiest and humblest homage (see Ps. lxxii. 10, 11, 15, 17). "At the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow," etc. (Phil. ii. 10, 11). 4. *In the duration of his priesthood.* "Abideth a Priest continually." This is not to be taken literally as to Melchizedek. Of him it is true in this way, there is no record of the termination of his priesthood by death or otherwise. As he did not receive it from his ancestors, it was not transmitted to his descendants: he yielded "up his priesthood to no one." But in a higher sense his great Antitype "abideth a Priest continually." He is "a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." "He ever liveth to make intercession for them that draw near unto God through him."—W. J.

Ver. 16.—*The constitution of our great High Priest.* "Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment," etc. In this verse there is a triple antithesis; law is antithetical to power, commandment to life, and carnal to indissoluble. This suggests the following observations concerning the priesthood of Jesus Christ. He became Priest—

I. NOT BY THE OPERATION OF LITERAL "LAW," BUT BECAUSE OF HIS SPIRITUAL "POWER." Law in the text is the Levitical Law, with the fulfilment of which the Jewish priests had so much to do. It was a thing of the letter—a written thing; it possessed no inherent power; it could impart no spiritual power. By this law the priests of the Judaic economy were constituted. But our Lord was constituted a priest, not by this law, but because of his own spiritual energy. He was in himself perfectly fitted for the high functions of this holy office. Because he was a Divine Being, he had power to represent God to man; because he was a human being, he had power to represent man to God. Inexhaustible spiritual strength is in him for the renewal of the lost moral power of those whose High Priest he is. Because he has power to redeem, sympathize with, succour, and save men, he was made the great High Priest for men.

II. NOT BY AN EXTERNAL "COMMANDMENT," BUT BY HIS INHERENT "LIFE." The "commandment" is that part of the Levitical law which ordered the institution and succession of the priesthood. By this statute the descendants of Aaron were

appointed priests, irrespective of their personal character and qualifications for the office. But Jesus was made a priest, not by that commandment, but contrary to it, seeing that he was not of the tribe of Levi, but of Judah. It was because of his inner life that he was constituted the High Priest of humanity. Being what he was and is, he could do no other than take up our cause, suffer for us, die for us, and appear as our Representative with the Father. This truth is forcibly expressed by Dr. Bushnell: "Vicarious sacrifice belongs to no office or undertaking outside of holy character, but to holy character itself. Such is love that it must insert itself into the conditions, burden itself with the wants, and woes, and losses, and even wrongs, of others. It waits for no atoning office, or any other kind of office. It undertakes because it is love, not because a project is raised or an office appointed. It goes into suffering and labour and painful sympathy, because its own everlasting instinct runs that way. . . . The true and simple account of Christ's suffering is, that he had such a heart as would not suffer him to be turned away from us, and that he suffered for us even as love must willingly suffer for its enemy. The beauty and power of his sacrifice is, that he suffers morally and because of his simple excellence, and not to fill a contrived place in a scheme of legal justification. He scarcely minds how much he suffers or how, if only he can do love's work."¹ Because of his perfect purity, and infinite love and unspeakable compassion, he necessarily became the great High Priest of the human race.

III. NOT AS A TEMPORARY FUNCTION, BUT AS A PERMANENT RELATION. They who were made priests "after the law of a carnal commandment" were priests only for a time. One generation performed the duties of the office for a number of years, and then was succeeded in those duties by another generation, which in its turn would also pass away. "But after the power of an indissoluble life" our Saviour was made a priest. He is "a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." By its nature his life is perpetual; and he continues for ever as our Representative with God (cf. vers. 23—25). Because of the perfection of this priesthood, human salvation in glorious fulness is attainable. Laws and ceremonies alone could not work out for us any real deliverance from sin, or work in us any true and progressive spiritual life. We need vitality and power in any system or person who would render to us effective help. And in this aspect "the priesthood of Christ," as Bushnell says, "is graduated by the wants and measures of the human soul; the endless life in which he comes matches and measures the endless life in mankind whose fall he is to restore; providing a salvation as strong as their sin, and as long or lasting as the run of their immortality. He is able thus to save unto the uttermost." His life is reproductive. His power is communicable. He imparts spiritual energy to those who by faith are one with him. Apart from him we can do nothing. We can do all things in him that strengtheneth us.—W. J.

Ver. 19.—*The inability and capability of the Law.* "For the Law made nothing perfect," etc. The Law spoken of is the ceremonial Law, as we see from the preceding verse. The moral Law is not disannulled in Christianity. Its authority is maintained, its sanctions are corroborated by our Lord. But the ceremonial Law was abrogated by Christ. It found its fulfilment, and so was done away in Christianity. Notice—

I. THE INABILITY OF THE LAW. It was weak and unprofitable; it made nothing perfect. 1. *It awakened the consciousness of guilt, but it had no power to remove that consciousness.* Its sacrifices proclaimed man a sinner and needing atonement with God; but they would not ease the conscience of its sad sense of sin, or inspire the peace of forgiveness in the troubled breast. 2. *It showed the necessity of mediation between God and man, but it made no satisfactory provision for that necessity.* The people had to approach the Most High through the priests; the priests alone must offer their sacrifices; the priests alone had access to the holy place of the tabernacle and the temple. The office of the priesthood exhibited the need of mediation, but it was not an adequate answer to that need. The Judaic priests were themselves sinners; they needed to offer sacrifices for themselves; they were mortal and passed away by death, even as other men. 3. *It presented a true ideal of life and conduct, but it afforded no help for the attainment of that ideal.* The Law condemns sin; it commands righteousness. But how shall we obey its commands? "To will is present with me,

¹ 'The Vicarious Sacrifice,' pt. I. ch. v.

but to do that which is good is not. For the good which I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I practise." Can the Law help us in this need? Can it inspire us with strength to do the true and the good? It has no power to convert, or strengthen, or sanctify the soul. It shows us our obligation, but it affords us no help to discharge it. "What the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," etc. (Rom. viii. 3, 4).

II. THE CAPABILITY OF THE LAW. "The Law made nothing perfect, but it was the bringing in of a better hope, by which we draw nigh unto God." We adopt the rendering of the margin of the Authorized Version, and the interpretation of Calvin, Ebrard, *et al.*, that the Law made nothing perfect, but it prepared the way for the better hope.¹ This hope is the gospel hope; the hope which has been brought in by our great High Priest. The Law led the way to this. "The Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." "A large picture-book," as Dr. Binney says, "was put before the scholars in the splendid objects of the Levitical institute. The series of things included in this was like a series of prints arranged in order, bound and gilded, and spread before the young, wondering eyes of a number of children. The altar with its fire and blood; the laver with its purifying contents; the sacrifice with the penitent putting upon it his sin, or lifting his eyes and his hands to heaven; the priest in the garments expressive of humiliation, or in his gorgeous robes of 'glory and beauty;'—these things, with many others that might be specified, were all like so many significant objects, vividly portrayed on the several leaves of an immense picture-book. By familiarity with them the minds of the learners were gradually to open to the spiritual idea contained in each; or were to be prepared for apprehending it when, 'in the fulness of time,' it should be revealed. . . . With new views of the central figure, so much the theme of prophetic song, and the object of national desire, the whole of the Levitical system undergoes a change. It comes to have an intention, to be looked at as constructed for a purpose, which gives to it a deeper and diviner significance than was at first suspected. Priest and sacrifice, altar and propitiation, cease to be realities; they are understood to be only shadows and signs of what was to be found substantially in the person and work, the acts and offices of the great High Priest of our profession." This hope, for which the Law prepared the way, was better than any which the Law could inspire. 1. *It is clearer as to its object.* The Christian hopes for perfection of being; for holiness of heart and life here, and for heaven hereafter. These things are brought into clearer light in this gospel age than they were under the Law. 2. *It is firmer in its foundation.* It rests upon Jesus Christ. He is the Rock upon which our confidence and expectation are based. He has revealed God the Father unto us. He has rendered perfect obedience to the holy Law. He offered himself a Sacrifice for sin, of infinite and perpetual efficacy. He ever liveth to represent us in heaven, whither he has entered as our Forerunner. He is "a tried Stone, a sure Foundation" for the hopes of men to rest upon. 3. *It is more blessed in its influence.* "Through which we draw nigh unto God." The Judaic priesthood tended to make men feel their distance from God, and to keep them at a distance. The priesthood of Jesus Christ brings men near unto him. We need not now the human priest and the bleeding victim for our acceptable approach to the Divine Father. Through the Saviour we may draw nigh unto him in our penitence for sin, and obtain forgiveness; in our consecration to him, and meet with gracious acceptance; in the presentation of our needs to him, and receive suitable and abundant supplies; and in hallowed communion with him, and find in it the foretaste and earnest of heaven.—W. J.

Ver. 25.—*Christ's perfect power to save.* "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost," etc. The text suggests the following observations:—

I. THAT CHRIST'S SAVING POWER IS INFINITE. "He is able to save them to the uttermost." Notice: 1. *The nature of this salvation.* It may be viewed: (1) Negatively. It is deliverance from sin; not merely from the punishment of sin, but from its guilt, its pollution, and its power. (2) Positively. It is the conference of eternal

¹ If the translation of the Revised Version, and the interpretation of Alford, Bleek, *et al.*, be preferred, still the main lines of thought we are pursuing would be suitable by taking vers. 18, 19 as text, and making the chief divisions: 1. The abrogation of the ceremonial law. 2. The introduction of the better hope.

life. By eternal life we do not mean endless existence, for that may become a curse; but life—holy, harmonious, progressive, blessed, perpetual life. "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life." "The salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." 2. *The perfection of this salvation.* "Able to save to the uttermost." The word rendered "uttermost" does not refer to the duration, but to the perfection, the completeness, of this salvation. Both by its etymology and by its place in the argument it is the exact antithesis of the first clause in ver. 19. "The Law made nothing perfect;" but "he is able to save perfectly," or to completeness, "them that come unto God by him." The perfection of his saving power authorizes the assertion that he is able to save: (1) The most wicked characters. Saul of Tarsus was "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious;" he spake of himself as chief of sinners; yet he obtained mercy, and became a most devoted disciple and most heroic apostle of Jesus Christ. The dying robber is another example (Luke xxiii. 42, 43). Degraded drunkards, profane swearers, grovelling misers, wilful unbelievers, cruel oppressors, in countless numbers have been saved by him. None are so deeply sunk in the horrible pit of sin as to be beyond the reach of the long and strong arm of the perfect Saviour. He is "mighty to save." (2) The greatest numbers. On the day of Pentecost three thousand souls were converted and added to the Christian Church. St. John in vision "beheld a great multitude, which no man could number," etc. (Rev. vii. 9, 10). He is able to save countless millions. Were the number of sinners multiplied a thousand-fold he would still be able to save them. (3) To the most glorious condition. He does not leave his work in man incomplete. "He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." "He which began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ." How glorious must that character be which he has perfected! "We shall be like him." "We shall ever be with the Lord." We shall enter into his joy; we shall sit down with him upon his throne.

II. THAT CHRIST'S SAVING POWER IS GUARANTEED BY THE PERPETUITY OF HIS PRIESTLY OFFICE. "Wherefore also he is able to save them to the uttermost . . . seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." The chief meaning of "to make intercession" is to appear as the representative of another, being moved to do so by feeling for him or with him. Our Saviour's intercession for us does not mean that he is pleading our cause with One who is ill disposed toward us, and needs to be placated by him; or that he is supplicating blessings for us from One who is unwilling to bestow them (John xvi. 26, 27). But he does represent us with the great Father, and he is deeply and tenderly identified with us in feeling. He represents us because he sympathizes with us. But in our text, as Alford points out, the intercession "implies the whole mediatorial work, which the exalted Saviour performs for his own with his heavenly Father, either by reference to his past death of blood by which he has bought them for himself, or by continued intercession for them." Christ's perpetual intercession signifies that: 1. *The efficacy of his work for men is perpetual.* The great truths which he enunciated concerning life and duty, sin and salvation, holiness and God, are vital and powerful now as ever they were. His redemptive work accomplished upon earth is as efficacious now as ever it was. His atoning death for us has lost none of its ancient power to touch and subdue, to convert and sanctify, the soul of man. "The word of the cross is the power of God" still to save them that believe. 2. *The efficacy of his work in men is perpetual.* Our Saviour makes intercession with us as well as for us. He speaks and works within us for our salvation. By his Holy Spirit he encourages and strengthens his people. The Spirit guards us from error and guides us into truth; he restrains us from the wrong and inspires us for the right, etc. Here, then, is the guarantee of the abiding perfection of Christ's saving power: he is our perpetual representative with the Divine Father; the efficacy of his redeeming work and the merit of his sacrificial death are unabated; and by his Spirit he is still a living presence and power amongst men.

III. THAT CHRIST'S SAVING POWER IS MADE AVAILABLE ON THE SIMPLEST CONDITION. "To save them . . . that draw near unto God through him." Moral approach to God through the mediation of Jesus Christ is the condition upon which this salvation is bestowed. It is implied that man is morally remote from God. "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God." "Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." If we would be saved we must draw near unto

him. 1. *The nature of this approach.* It is not merely intellectual—the apprehension of the truth concerning him. It is a sympathetic and vital approach to him. It is coming to him in humble penitence for our sin that we may obtain forgiveness; in grateful affection to him for his great love towards us; and in earnest desire to obey and serve him. 2. *The medium of this approach.* “Through him,” i.e. Jesus Christ; because (1) he removes the obstacles which prevented our approach to God. Our guilty fears, and our unworthy suspicions concerning the Father, he banishes. (2) He presents attractions which encourage our approach to God. He reveals the willingness of the heavenly Father to receive and welcome and bless us. “Jesus saith, I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by Me.” Thus our subject supplies strong encouragement (1) to the Christian believer to “press on unto perfection;” and (2) to the awakened sinner to draw near unto God through Christ in assured hope of complete salvation.—W. J.

Vers. 26—28.—*The High Priest in whom man's need is met.* “For such a High Priest became us, holy, harmless,” etc. By way of introduction let us glance at three truths which are either expressed or implied in the text. 1. *That man needs a high priest.* (1) As the offerer of sacrifices on his behalf. The awakened conscience, sensible of its guilt, feeling that sin merits suffering, cries out for sacrifice for its sin. (2) As his representative with God. The sinner who is alive to his own character and condition feels that he needs some one to represent him with the holy God. 2. *That the high priest who would satisfactorily meet man's need should possess certain qualities.* Any priest will not do. There should be a fitness between the holder of the office and the duties of the office—between the priesthood and the human needs to which it would minister. 3. *That these qualities are found in Jesus Christ.* His priesthood answers to man's needs. “Such a High Priest became us,” i.e. was suitable to us, was appropriate to our condition and need. Let us now look at the qualities which render our Saviour the appropriate High Priest for man, as they are here specified. It is important to remember that some essential attributes of our great High Priest have already been mentioned in this Epistle (ch. iv. 15).

I. HE IS PERFECT IN HIS CHARACTER. “For such a High Priest became us, holy, harmless, undefiled,” etc. 1. *Holy.* Our Lord was truly and inwardly holy. His holiness did not consist merely in his consecration to his office, but in the perfect sanctification of his whole being. The Jewish high priest had “Holiness to the Lord” inscribed upon his mitre; but in Christ it was interwoven with every fibre of his being, and stamped upon every expression of his life. 2. *Harmless.* The Jewish high priest was sinless only in this way, that he offered sacrifice for his own sin before offering for the sins of the people, and that he cleansed himself ceremonially before appearing before God on behalf of others. But Jesus was perfectly free from sin. In all his relations with men he was guileless. And no wrong was ever done by him in any way to any one. 3. *Undefiled.* Sin is a polluting thing. Ceremonial purity was required in the Jewish high priests. But our Lord was undefiled both legally and morally. In thought and feeling, in word and action, in inward heart and outward life, he was stainless. The Jewish high priests needed to offer sacrifices for their own sins; but our great High Priest had no personal guilt to expiate, or sins to confess, or impurities to purge. 4. *Separate from sinners.* The Jewish high priest was required scrupulously to refrain from association with any person who was ceremonially unclean (Lev. xxi. 10—15). Our Lord was “separated from sinners.” We do not regard this as meaning local separation. He did not shun association with sinners during his life upon earth. It was charged against him by the self-righteous religionists of his day, “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” “They murmured, saying, He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner.” “A friend of publicans and sinners.” His separation from sinners was far higher and diviner than any merely local or physical isolation. “Christ in his intercourse with sinners,” as Ebrard says, “remained inwardly free from all participation in their sinfulness, inwardly untouched by its contagion; notwithstanding that he mingled with men in all their varieties of character and situation, he yet never let drop, for a moment, that inner veil of chaste holiness which separated him from sinners. This is what is meant by the expression, ‘separate from sinners.’” His moral health was so vigorous, his spiritual purity so intense, that he could associate

with the morally corrupt and degraded without contracting even the slightest moral defilement. How sublime is our great High Priest in the perfection of his character! Of all the sons of men, of him alone can it be said that he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners." How immeasurably superior is he to Aaron and every other Jewish high priest! Their perfection was only ceremonial and symbolical; they were "men having infirmity;" they were liable to sin; they were subject to death, and to the termination of their priesthood. But our Saviour had no moral infirmity. In his character and conduct, in his person and office, he was gloriously perfect. He is now "perfected for evermore."

II. HE IS PERFECT IN HIS POSITION. "And made higher than the heavens." This exalted position which our great Representative occupies has already engaged our attention (see on ch. i. 3; ii. 9; and cf. ch. viii. 1; Phil. ii. 9; Rev. v. 12).

III. HE IS PERFECT IN HIS SACRIFICE. "He needeth not daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices," etc. 1. *The value of the offering.* "He offered up himself." Alford has pointed out that "this is the first place in the Epistle where mention is made of Christ's having offered himself. Henceforward it becomes more and more familiar to the reader: 'once struck, the note sounds on ever louder and louder' (Delitzsch)." The value of this offering is seen in two things: (1) The sacrifice which was offered—"himself." Not a thing, but a person; not a sinful person, but the "holy, harmless, undefiled" One—the richest, most beneficent, and most blessed personal life. (2) The spirit in which this sacrifice was offered. Our Saviour was both the Sacrifice and the Priest; both the Offering and the Offerer. And his sacrifice was a voluntary one. He freely "gave himself a ransom for all" (cf. John x. 17, 18). 2. *The finality of the offering.* "This he did once for all, when he offered up himself." His sacrifice will never be repeated. (1) Its repetition is not necessary. The Jewish sacrifices had to be repeated day after day and year after year, because they were imperfect. But the sacrifice of our great High Priest is complete, gloriously and perpetually efficacious, and needs no repetition, and admits of neither improvement nor addition. (2) Its repetition is not possible. When Christ appears again it will be, not in humiliation, but in glory; not as the great Sacrifice, but as the supreme Sovereign.—W. J.

Vers. 1—10.—*Christ a Priest after the order of Melchizedek.* The writer now returns from the digression. So far he has established from their Scriptures the priesthood of Christ. But that is not enough; that is no reason why he should be preferred to Aaron. He proceeds, then, to show that, however great Aaron was, Christ was greater. But on what grounds can he establish this to the satisfaction of a Hebrew? He rests his proof entirely on those Scriptures which the Hebrew accepted as authoritative, and two passages (Ps. cx. and Gen. xiv.) supply him with all he needs. The first states that Christ was the Priest after the order of Melchizedek; the second that Abraham, from whom all Israel, Aaron included, derived their greatness, did homage to Melchizedek; and thus the point was proved, for Aaron, in the person of Abraham, acknowledged Melchizedek's superiority. That is the argument. Subject—*Christ a Priest after the order of Melchizedek.*

I. THE OBJECT HERE IS TO SHOW THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD TO THAT OF AARON. 1. *We have the story of Melchizedek*, the priest of Salem, to whom Abraham gave a tenth. 2. *This story shows that Melchizedek was greater than Aaron.* Abraham, the head of their nation, recognized Melchizedek as a divinely appointed priest—one who had a right to tithes from him, and the power to bless him. The reception of tithes by the Jewish priests was "the acknowledged symbol of their supremacy over their brethren" (Dale). But here was one who received tithes from Abraham himself! "And without contradiction the less is blessed by the greater." So that in Abraham kneeling before the righteous King of Salem, the whole Mosaic priesthood practically affirmed its inferiority to that of Melchizedek. 3. *But Melchizedek is declared to be a type of Christ.* (Note: Strange that for a thousand years this affirmation should have lain unnoticed in their sacred books till the inspired apostle throws this wondrous light upon it! How much is hidden in the Word of God to be revealed yet, to our surprise!)

II. OBSERVE THE POINTS IN WHICH, AS SEEN IN THE PRIESTHOOD OF MELCHIZEDEK, THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD TO THAT OF AARON CONSISTS. Christ was

not different to Aaron, but better; he was all that Aaron was, but he was more. We may learn from this ancient king-priest in what this "more" consisted. 1. *Christ's priesthood is universal.* Aaron's was for a limited circle—the seed of Abraham; but Melchizedek represented a priesthood which had a world-wide aspect, existing two thousand years before Aaron. Abel, Noah, Job, were priests of that order. So Christ is for all who will. His gospel is glad tidings, not for a few, nor for a section of the Church, nor for certain types of Christian character, but for all people. 2. *Christ's priesthood is continuous.* It is not meant that Melchizedek had no end of days, but that is true of him as far as the history is concerned. We do not read that he died, or that his priesthood terminated; and this serves to show the contrast between a continuous priesthood and one which, like the Aaronic, was continually changing; not begun till thirty years of age, nor continued after fifty, and only exercised at parts of the year. From the first, Jesus made intercession for the transgressors ("the Lamb slain before," etc.), and ever liveth for this. We are always sure of him. He never sleeps, nor forgets, nor is weary, nor gives place to another. 3. *Christ's priesthood is royal.* Aaron was only priest; Levi was king. Melchizedek was both. So Jesus, even on the cross most truly fulfilling his priestly work, was "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews," a Priest upon his throne. A priest or a king could never satisfy us. We need both—priestly sympathy and the resources of royalty; the law of the king proceeding from the love of the priest. *Christ fulfils his priesthood royally*; he is no vain friend to sinful man. *Christ fulfils his kingship mediatorially*, holding all his power on behalf of his redemptive work.

III. OBSERVE SOME OF THE INCIDENTAL LESSONS WHICH A COMPARISON OF CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD WITH THAT OF MELCHIZEDEK SUGGESTS. 1. *That righteousness and peace are the results of his priestly work.* "Melchizedek"—king of righteousness; "King of Salem"—king of peace. Righteousness and peace are the end of the atoning, interceding work of the Son of God. 2. *That he has a right to the priest's portion from his Church.* The Jewish priesthood had a right to tithes from (not those who dissented from them, not idolaters, but) the sacred nation, but there was no such enactment binding on Abraham; his was a free-will offering. Christ has a right to our offerings—and "how much owest thou?"—but he only accepts the free offerings of a grateful heart. 3. *That Christ's priestly benediction is granted to his weary people.* The great Priest not simply goes to God for us in intercession, but comes forth from God to us in benediction. Christ is ever doing for us what Melchizedek did for Abraham when he came forth to greet him in his weariness with bread and wine.—C. N.

Vers. 11—25.—*Further proofs of the superiority of Christ's priesthood involved in the symbol of Melchizedek.* Note: The word "Law" in vers. 11, 12, 19 must not be understood to refer to the Jewish system, but simply to the code of regulations by which the priesthood was appointed. The apostle is thinking throughout the chapter, not of the Jewish dispensation, but of the priesthood. The expression, "weak and unprofitable," does not imply that there was failure in God's former method. The regulations about the Jewish priesthood were intended to be "weak and unprofitable;" that was their benefit. Only thus could they lead on to the heavenly things they foreshadowed.

I. CONSIDER THE PROOFS IN THIS PASSAGE OF THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD. They are all based on Ps. cx. 4. 1. *The Divine appointment of a second priesthood by a different mode proves its superiority to the former.* (Vers. 11—18.) Their Scriptures declared that the Messiah did come from a different tribe to Aaron, and was appointed Priest on a different principle; not by a mere physical arrangement—sonship to another, a "carnal commandment," or regulation—but by his own inherent life. Since God could not remove what was perfect, or supersede a good arrangement by a worse, that which appeared to take the place of the old was necessarily superior to it. 2. *The greater solemnity of the appointment of this second priesthood proves its superiority to the former.* (Vers. 20—22.) Aaron and his sons were appointed by a simple revelation of the Divine will (Exod. xxviii. 1). The terms of the appointment of Jesus are—"The Lord sware, and will not repent." When God purposed what was not to change he confirmed it by an oath, and probably the Jews understood that well. God is "never represented in Scripture as swearing to anything but what is fixed and

immutable" (Dr. Brown). The fact that Christ was made priest not without an oath shows that his priesthood was of supreme importance. 3. *The eternal permanence of this second priesthood proves its superiority to the former.* (Vers. 23—25.) The Jewish priests were subject to human frailties and imperfections; their term of service swiftly passed, and their place was taken by another. Indeed, the whole family might be exterminated (specially when at first, in the wilderness, it consisted of but five men) by pestilence, crime, or war, and Israel would find itself, as to-day, with no priest, no atonement, no mercy-seat, no mediator. That shows the inadequacy of that priesthood. But Christ is High Priest for ever "according to the power of an indissoluble life." How superior to that which is according to the flesh! "All flesh is grass."

II. GLANCE AT SOME OF THE PRACTICAL TRUTHS INVOLVED IN THIS SUPERIORITY.

1. *That the Aaronic priesthood is superseded by the priesthood of Christ.* The Romish doctrine that an order of men, on the mythical ground that they can trace their succession to the apostles, are the appointed mediators between God and man, is a repetition of the Levitical system. But this priesthood is unnecessary, since Christ is in every point superior to it, and they who have Jesus do not need Aaron. Moreover, this carnal, genealogical priesthood is abolished by God, and shown to have been only a temporary expedient at the best. 2. *That what the old dispensation did for a few, the Christian does for all.* In the Old Testament the priests are those who draw nigh to God (e.g. Lev. x. 8) whilst the multitude stood without. Contrast ver. 10. "We" who are not of Levi's tribe, but simply believers in Christ, may now enter the Holiest of all—that is, we are all priests. Christ's high priesthood involves the priesthood of all believers. "Those who draw nigh to God" is the Christian name. 3. *That what the ceremonial law could not do, Jesus can.* Whilst the Levitical system was "weak and unprofitable," the priesthood of Jesus brought in a system that was perfect. The perfection of a priestly system consisted in its ability to bring men unto God. Men are crying, "Nearer, my God, to thee," in vain, because they seek it through human aid, religious ceremonies, legal observances; they have gone back to Judaism, which is dead and cannot help them. Now let them try Jesus. Where Aaron fails, Jesus succeeds. "He is able to save them to," etc.—C. N.

Vers. 26—28.—*Christ's superiority in the infinite perfection of his personal character.* The second great argument for Christ's superiority to Aaron. The reason for the introduction of this argument here is probably that the writer is still thinking of Ps. cx. The psalm speaks of Christ exalted to the highest heavenly position, and as a Priest for ever. Of both these points the echo rings out here in vers. 26 and 28. Here is sharply drawn the picture of our Lord's personal perfection in a few carefully moderate words (for it is a delicate subject), and the conclusion is apparent. (Note on word "daily" in ver. 27. The high priest did not "daily" offer sin offerings; the morning and evening sacrifices were not offered by the high priest, nor were they sacrifices for sin but in a secondary sense, as they were burnt offerings. The great expiatory sacrifice offered by the high priest was on the Day of Atonement. The word "daily" here must mean day after day; one day of atonement after another.)

I. THE PERSONAL PERFECTION OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. "Holy, harmless," etc.—so many aspects of the sinlessness of Jesus. The Hebrew probably saw here what was true of the high priest symbolically, spoken of Jesus literally. The one had inscribed on his forehead "Holiness unto the Lord," which he had in symbol; the other was "the Holy One of God." The one was harmless (literally, "without evil"), for he could not offer for others till his own sin was expiated, but that was only an imputed sinlessness; the other had no sins to offer for. The one was "undefiled," obliged to be ceremonially clean; the other was in himself "without blemish and without spot." The one was "separate from sinners," excluded for seven days before the Day of Atonement even from his own family, but this was only physical; the other was able to say, "I am not of the world." 1. *The personal perfection of Jesus as seen in his manifested purity.* "Holy," etc., represents his purity from different standpoints. "Holy," as regards his relation to God; "harmless," his relation to man; "undefiled," his relation to himself; "separate," etc., the sum of the whole. In every direction Jesus was without sin. And so much was apparent to the men of his day. His enemies, his relatives, his disciples, all bear witness to this. He could ask of all,

"Which of you convinceth me of sin?" 2. *The perfection of Jesus is seen in his personal consciousness of sinlessness.* "Who needeth not," etc. Christ offered no sacrifice for himself. He always distinguished between himself and sinners. "If ye [not 'we'], being evil;" "I do always those things which," etc.; "I have glorified thee on the earth;" "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Christ knew he was holy, and that proves that he was; for confessedly he was, at least, the best of men, and the holier a man becomes the more sensible he is of failure. 3. *The perfection of Jesus is seen in the Father's endorsement of it.* "He was made higher than the heavens." Consider that in connection with Christ's claim to be sinless. His resurrection and ascension and enthronement are the highest pledge of the perfection he asserted for himself.

II. *THIS PERSONAL PERFECTION WAS NECESSARY TO CONSTITUTE A PERFECT HIGH PRIEST.* "Such a High Priest became us." Our needs are beyond the help of any one less. 1. The first function of the high priest was to offer sacrifice. Then observe *how Christ's holiness perfects him as a Sacrifice.* He could not have atoned for others if he had sins of his own; but the offering of the Holy One had an inestimable worth. That, at least, vindicates the Law, and pays the sinner's debt, however great. 2. The next function of the high priest was intercession. Then observe *how Christ's holiness perfects him as an Intercessor.* We can trust in no mediator till we know he is on good terms with the king. Because Christ is the Holy One of God, he has perpetual access to the Father; his will and the Father's are the same, and the Father delights in granting his request. Jesus can never be refused. 3. The third function of the high priest was to instruct. Then observe *how Christ's holiness perfects him as a Teacher.* It is in his holiness we learn what most of all we need to know—God's will about us. We look at Jesus, and there it is. Moreover, looking at him produces the same holiness in us, for looking we become like.

III. *THUS PERFECTED, CHRIST IS DECLARED BY THE DIVINE OATH TO BE HIGH PRIEST FOR EVER.* "The word of the oath," etc. Notice how many perfect things are set forth here. 1. *A perfect Sacrifice for sin.* "By one offering he hath for ever," etc. 2. *A perfect High Priest to impart the benefits of that Sacrifice.* Our tendency is to dwell on Christ's earthly life, or on his death; but the Epistles dwell most on his present life. And that is the view of our Lord he desires us to keep most prominent: "I am he that liveth," etc.; "Therefore he is able to save," etc. 3. *A perfect promise that Christ will do all this.* "Will," for all who will let him, for all "who come unto God by him," i.e. for all who take him to be their High Priest. God pledges his oath for that. How needlessly men are lost! They are not called to risk their soul on a trifle!—C. N.

Vers. 1-3.—*Melchizedek a typical priest.* The inspired writer now resumes his consideration of Melchizedek as a type of our Lord as Priest, and notes the fact that he stands in Old Testament Scripture quite alone, and has no genealogy which informs us from whom he sprang, and has no successor to whom he hands over his priestly office. As far as Scripture narrative is concerned, he "abideth a high priest continually." The typical resemblances between Melchizedek and our Lord are—

I. *THE SUBLIME SOLITARINESS OF THIS PRIEST.* He stands alone as the servant and minister of the most high God, and while the Jewish priests appear like the columns of a temple, Melchizedek rises as an obelisk, which by its loneliness attracts attention and awakens thought. Our Lord is, in his office, foreshadowed by this ancient priest; for he stands alone, and has had no predecessor, and will have no successor as High Priest over the house of God.

II. *THE UNIVERSALITY OF HIS OFFICE FINDS ITS COUNTERPART IN JESUS CHRIST.* Melchizedek was a priest for men as men, and before the separation of the race into the two classes of Jews and Gentiles. The successors of Aaron were limited in their ministrations to the twelve tribes of Israel; but the Redeemer is the Priest for the race of mankind: "for with him is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free, and there is neither male nor female."

III. *THE INTEREST DISPLAYED BY MELCHIZEDEK IN THE AFFAIRS OF WORSHIPPERS.* Abraham had pursued the kings who had taken captive the family of Lot, and carried off much spoil from the inhabitants of Sodom. On his return the priest met him and his wearied troop with bread and wine, and blessed the patriarch in the Name of the most high God. In like manner our Lord has an abiding interest in his worshippers,

whom he delivers from evil, maintains in spiritual vigour, and blesses with his refreshments and Divine approbation. As Melchizedek blessed Abraham, so our Lord at his departure from the world lifted up his hands and blessed his disciples, and has ever since blessed his followers with needful grace and supplies of spiritual power.

IV. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MELCHIZEDEK'S NAMES IS REALIZED IN CHRIST. 1. *Our Lord was "the King of righteousness."* This was verified in his personal life, in which he fulfilled all righteousness, and

"In his life the Law appears
Drawn out in living characters."

He preached righteousness in the great congregation, and everywhere enforced it by the sanction and authority of his Father in heaven. He urged the claims of righteousness upon thought, word, and act; in the synagogue and the temple, and in all the intercourse of life. His death realized the idea of eternal righteousness in the condemnation of sin, and the provision of a way of salvation in which God could "be just, and the Justifier of him that believeth in Christ." All his subjects were to be righteous, and he led them to look for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness should for ever dwell. 2. *The next title which Melchizedek bore was "King of peace," and this was realized gloriously in the Saviour.* His Divine ministry produced peace by giving repentance, which is the rejection of unholy and rebellious thoughts, and our reconciliation to the thoughts of God. Then comes peace through his blood. There is peace from the constancy of his superintendence of his people, and the certainty of his efficient interest in their daily life, whereby he makes all things work together for their good. He will lead them forward until their peace shall be as a river, and their righteousness as the waves of the sea. He is our Peace, who brings men of all nations to the fold on the eternal hills, and there shall be one flock and one Shepherd.—B.

VER. 4—10.—*Christ superior to Melchizedek.* I. THE GREATNESS OF OUR LORD IS FORESHADOWED BY MELCHIZEDEK'S RECEIVING TITHES FROM ABRAHAM. As the representative of Jehovah, Abraham paid tithes to this distinguished priest. There is here an instance of that corporate principle which appears in the writings of Paul, who affirms that by the sin of Adam there came upon the race spiritual loss and exposure to death; and by the appearance and glorious work of our Lord many are made righteous now, and obtain grace which reigns unto eternal life. Abraham here represents the Jewish people and the Jewish priesthood, who in the person of their illustrious ancestor acknowledge the authority of Melchizedek, who was the type of the Son of God. It was an impressive argument for the unvalued glory of Christ as a Priest that the tribe of Levi paid tithes to him who foreshadowed him whose name is above every name. Reverting to the absence of all mention of Melchizedek's death on the sacred page, there is a contrast supplied between the Levites who receive tithes and die, but, as they pass through their ministry, pay tithes representatively to him of whom "it is witnessed that he liveth." Being once upon the right track, the writer discovers abundant proofs of the superiority of Christ to all the priesthood of the earthly temple, and finds the fulfilment of the words of him who promised the gift of the Holy Spirit in those memorable words, "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you" (John xvi. 14).

II. THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST TYPIFIED BY MELCHIZEDEK'S OFFICIAL ACT OF BLESSING ABRAHAM. The object of this branch of the argument is to show the pre-eminence of the type, and consequently the glory of the Antitype. Melchizedek blessed Abraham (Gen. xiv. 19, 20) in an act of solemn prayer to the most high God. There is one ritual form of blessing which was pronounced by Aaron and his sons in these words: "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace" (Numb. vi. 24—26). The word "to bless," in Hebrew, is derived from a root which signifies "to bend the knee," and therefore to bow before him who invokes the blessing of Jehovah, which "maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow therewith." The less is blessed of the better in office, spiritual dignity, and connection with the resources of Heaven. The Hebrew Christians must see, as we may see, how arguments, illustrations, and typical events multiply to increase our confidence in him upon whose head are the many crowns of realized type, fulfilled prediction, and official glory. The last

glimpse of our Lord's earthly life seems to give the finishing touch to this subject. "For it came to pass, while he blessed his disciples, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven" (Luke xxiv. 51).—B.

Vers. 11—14.—*A Divine priesthood.* I. THE DIVINE WISDOM JUSTIFIED BY THE APPOINTMENT OF A PRIEST AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK. The argument is, that if perfection had been realized by the Law of Moses there would have been no change in the methods of worship and the order of the ministry. It is not consistent with the wisdom of God to do and undo, and to repair imperfections and supply deficiencies by after-thoughts and supplementary arrangements. The true and Divine purpose of the Law of Moses was to prepare for something better. It was our school-master to lead us to Christ. The Jews still cling to it as an unchangeable institution, and refuse to leave the wilderness of Sinai for the Canaan of gospel light and privilege. The prediction which referred to another Priest who should be after the order of Melchizedek was a proof that the Aaronic ministry was provisional, and therefore another order was necessary to harmonize with that reign of grace, unexampled wealth of privilege, and cheering prospects of eternal life which the gospel provides for sinful men. The change of dispensation is no proof of change in the mind of God, since the Jewish Law was a kind of parenthesis which gives meaning to revelations which went before and followed after; and the old tabernacle yields to the enduring fabric of grace against which "the gates of hell shall not prevail."

II. THE CHANGE OF PRIESTHOOD WAS NECESSARY FOR THE HARMONY AND CONSISTENCY OF DIVINE ARRANGEMENTS IN WORSHIP. It pleased God to act according to the counsel of his own will in the distribution of offices in the worship and national affairs of his ancient people Israel. No man was allowed to invade them who did not belong to the families and tribes which he chose to serve him. Hence the family of Levi was appointed to be priests, and members of the tribe of Judah were ordained to be kings over the nation. David, as a descendant from Judah, received many promises, and was permitted to enjoy prospects of the future dignity of his seed—in him who was "the Root and Offspring of David, and the bright and morning Star." But there is no word of promise that any of his tribe should minister at the altar and stand in the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement. Uzziah, one of the kings of the line of Judah, attempted to offer incense, and was in the presumptuous act smitten with leprosy, and was thrust, as an unclean person, from the temple courts (2 Chron. xxvi. 20). Moses laid down the law of the priesthood, and in none of the manifold details of priesthood, sacrifice, and worship, nor in any of the predictions of the future history of the tribes, is there any priestly appointment given to the family of Judah. The law must be changed. The new covenant must have its special and suitable ministry, and in the sphere of the gospels the dignity, sufficiency, and pre-eminence of Jesus Christ find their suitable exercise. It pleases God to put certain things together, and what "he hath joined, let no man put asunder."—B.

Vers. 15—17.—*The increasing evidence of the appointment of our Lord to be an unchangeable Priest.* This is to be found in the Divine oracle proclaimed in the hundred and tenth psalm. The distinction of Christ's priesthood is seen in the difference which subsists in his Divine office from that which was held by men who were made priests after a carnal commandment, which had to do with ceremonials and material matters chiefly, and who were mortal, and resembled in the brevity of their life and earthly charge the institution of which they were ministers. Our Lord rises infinitely above the Jewish priesthood, because he is appointed "after the power of an endless life." St. John beheld him, in the visions of Patmos, in the splendour of his priestly office as the Shepherd and Bishop of souls, and heard him say, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." Amid all the changes of human affairs and the diversified experiences of his followers he is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."—B.

Vers. 18, 19.—*The weakness and unprofitableness of the commandment was seen in its inability to cleanse the conscience from sin, and impart spiritual power to obey the moral Law.* It was therefore removed and displaced, and publicly disannulled by the

rending of the veil when our Lord died upon Calvary. The whole Law, priesthood, and sacrifices were treated as the brazen serpent in the wilderness when it had answered the end of its appointment in the healing of those who, through their murmuring, had been bitten and were exposed to death under the frown of Jehovah. It is not consistent with Divine wisdom and love to maintain a useless institution like Judaism when a better covenant, a nobler Priest, and a holier Sacrifice have been appointed for the salvation of mankind. While the Law made nothing perfect it had its uses, for it prepared the way for the introduction of a better hope than that which believers had before the appointment of Christ to be High Priest over the house of God. In the previous parts of this Epistle there are impressive allusions to the privilege of drawing near to the throne of grace, and the contrast is suggested between the remoteness in which worshippers stood in past days and the near and filial approach of those who draw nigh through Christ. Herein is the saying true, "The Law came by Moses; but grace and truth by Jesus Christ." To draw near to God now is for our dark and perplexed understandings to approach the Father of lights; and for our weak and faltering nature to lay hold of that strength which makes us mount up with wings as eagles, run and not be weary, walk and not faint.—B.

Vers. 19—22.—*The Divine Priest.* I. THE PRE-EMINENCE OF OUR LORD'S PRIESTHOOD ATTESTED BY THE SOLEMNITY OF HIS APPOINTMENT. The priests of the Mosaic Law were placed in their office by an act of the Divine will, and the order of their consecration was prescribed by the lawgiver, who probably superintended the process which fitted them to enter upon their duties. There was no oath proclaimed on the occasion. When Christ was appointed there was an oath, which was conveyed to the knowledge of the Church by David, the royal prophet. This oath declared the fixed and unchangeable purpose of God, that whatever else might change, the office of the high priesthood of Christ should never be abrogated. "For ever his word is settled in heaven." It is only on occasions of special solemnity that oaths are taken by men when they assume weighty and important offices. They are used at coronations of monarchs, and the appointment of judges and others who undertake to administer faithfully the charges which they assume. God condescends to engage by oath for the permanence and glory of the priesthood of Christ that he shall be a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. Here we see the loving care of God to invite and justify our trust in his dear Son. It is a vast and large confidence which he claims, and includes the rejection of all other confidences; our surrender to Christ of our understanding, will, and affections; our influence, time, and property; our present and the vast future; and, as the demand is large, there is all evidence and provision to make our trust in the High Priest a reasonable service. He is appointed by oath, and is the Surety of a better covenant; and so there is a proportion and harmony between the Surety and the covenant itself. In the scheme of redemption God hath abounded in all wisdom and prudence. The new wine is put into new bottles, and the consistency of all arrangements for our redemption proves that all things are of God.

II. THE AUTHORIZATION OF THE PRIESTHOOD. If any man had dared to approach Jehovah in the solemnities of worship without his express appointment, he would have been punished for his presumption. This is proved by the history of Uzziah (2 Chron. xxvi. 16). It is said of this king that his heart was lifted up, and, against the remonstrances of the priests, he would offer incense, and so combine the dignity of the priesthood and royalty in himself. "Pride went before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall," and he was confined as a leper until the day of his death. The vocation and appointment of Aaron were disputed by the Reubenites who had lost the priesthood, and the Levites who were ambitious of higher dignity; and the case was decided by the punishment of the revolters, and the miraculous foliage, blossoms, and fruit of Aaron's rod. Jesus Christ has the high and supreme authority of Jehovah for his appointment, and the writer quotes the second psalm, which predicts the regal glory of the Son, who was "of the seed of David according to the flesh; but was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. i. 3, 4). Then follows a quotation from another Messianic psalm, which declares that he is a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. The order of Aaron was too narrow and too imperfect to shadow forth the unrivalled dignity and worth of

him who is now set over the house of God. This latter type will reappear for further discussion, and therefore we rest upon this declaration of the eternal will which appoints the Redeemer to be the High Priest for the race of mankind. It is the will of God, which is declared in solemn prophecy; and if he speaks, it is done; "he commands, and it stands fast."

III. THE CONSECRATION OF CHRIST TO HIS DIVINE OFFICE AS A PRIEST. The consecration of Aaron and the priests of the Mosaic Law was very elaborate and impressive, but was unaccompanied with any distress of mind and suffering of the flesh. The sonship of our Lord was eternal, and as a Son he came from heaven to assume our nature and pass through a career of sorrow and bitter experience, that he might learn and prove his obedience to his Father. "He took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death." As he approached the close of his public ministry the agonies of his soul began to multiply in number and increase in intensity. His prayer in Gethsemane was probably present to the mind of the writer, where he was sorrowful even unto death, and implored, if it were possible, "that the cup might pass from him." He uttered his prayers with strong crying and tears. The usual manner of our Lord's teaching was quiet and gentle, for he did not lift up his voice nor cause it to be heard in the streets; but in the dire and inscrutable distress which came upon him, like Jacob in his mysterious wrestling, he wept and made supplication. He was heard on account of his godly fear or piety. It may be—for we would be cautious and reverential—that he was saved from death in Gethsemane, where he sweat "as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground," by the ministry of a mighty angel like Gabriel or Michael; or that he was delivered from the insupportable fear of the death of shame and agony which lay before him on Calvary. He was heard for his piety, and came off more than a conqueror. Whatever mystery surrounds this solemn fact, the lesson is obvious that disciples must learn obedience in imitation of their Master; that, having overcome, they may sit down with him in his throne. "Through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom." Having borne the sorrow, he has obtained the joy that was set before him, and being now consecrated by his sufferings and death, he is perfectly fitted for his mediatorial office, and becomes the Author of eternal salvation to all his obedient followers, and leads them onward to the glory of an immortal life. This is the highest and most glorious illustration of the methods of that grace which was seen in the life of Joseph, into whose soul the iron entered, whom the word of the Lord tried; but afterwards he shone in the light of wisdom, became the saviour of millions from the pangs of famine and death, kept alive the chosen seed, and prepared for the higher revelations of Horeb and Calvary. To obviate any doubts which might arise from so profound a humiliation on the part of Jesus Christ, it is repeated that he was "called of God a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek."—B.

Vers. 23—25.—*The immortal priesthood of Christ enhanced by weighty considerations.* The first is that the ancient priesthood passed through many hands, in which fact there were some obvious disadvantages. Some priests were so neglectful of their office that the prophet had to become a preacher of righteousness. All preachers had to pass through a process of education to gain fitness for their ministry; others were priests when there was no temple, no altar, and no holy of holies. Death came to them in turn, and lifted the mitre from the brow, the breastplate from the breast, and closed the lips which pronounced the priestly benediction. The second consideration is that our Lord has an unchangeable appointment, because death has no power over him now that he has taken his life again. There is no death in the sublime sphere of his ministry. He can say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" The value of this unfalling life is that it is devoted to the work of salvation. He is able to save to the uttermost by superintending the personal life of his followers, and supplying them with Christian peace and spiritual power, and by keeping before their minds his idea of salvation. He can infuse his own precious life through their souls, and lead through the paths of fellowship with God, evangelical obedience, and gracious discipline, until they are saved to the uttermost and attain to the resurrection of the dead. This is associated with his intercession, of which we have a sublime and affecting example in the seventeenth chapter of St. John's Gospel. If others condemn, he makes intercession. If others neglect or persecute, he is their friend in the presence of God. If his

people are in the outer court engaged in prayer, he is within the veil to offer acceptable incense. By his undecaying life he quietly pursues his own plans; and by the constancy of his ministry he gives a unity to his people of various communions, places of abode, and ages of time, who thus become one in Christ Jesus.—B.

Vers. 26—28.—*The two priesthoods: a contrast.* I. THE EXALTED AND PERFECT CHARACTER OF CHRIST IS CONTRASTED WITH THAT OF THE PRIESTS OF THE OLD LAW. There was a Divine fitness in the appointment of our Lord, because, as we learn from the evangelists, he was holy, and full of love to God; and so pure that the temptations of Satan and the wickedness of an "adulterous generation" never sullied his nature. He was harmless, and Pilate asked the question, "Why, what evil hath he done?" In our Lord there was no need of a sin offering to repair his relations to God. Angels who have never left their first estate need no sin offerings, for they have never transgressed the Divine Law. By the perfect purity of Christ's nature he was lifted above the level of the necessities of sinful men, and he consequently required no atonement for himself. Had he been imperfect, and his sacrifice of limited power, he must have suffered daily to remove the daily accumulation of sin. This is needless; for by one holy oblation, in which all the blessing redounds to men, he has provided an atonement which, like an inexhaustible fountain of grace, flows day and night, century after century, to wash away sin and produce Divine peace in the hearts of men.

II. ANOTHER IMPRESSIVE CONTRAST IS ADDUCED BETWEEN THE LORD JESUS AND THE PRIESTS OF THE LAW. The descendants of Aaron are described as having infirmity, which denotes the weakness, instability, and frailty of their nature. It points probably to something more serious, and may allude to the serious deficiencies and imperfections of their moral character. Some of them were grievously unmindful of the responsibility of their office, and allowed alien altars and idolatrous worship to defile the temple of Jehovah. The last traces of the priesthood in the pages of Holy Scripture present the unlovely portraits of Caiaphas, Annas, and others. To these men the writer does not allude by name, though the Christians who read the Epistle might feel the awful force of the reference, and say, "How is the fine gold changed!" The high priest delivered Christ to Pilate, and had the greater sin. The word of the oath appoints our Lord, who was consecrated and made perfect through sufferings; and therefore, over against the weak, sinful, and unworthy priesthood of mortal men, the Divine Son stands in the glory of his character and permanence and effects of ministry.—B.

Vers. 1—17.—*The priesthood for ever after the order of Melchizedek.* It is evident that the whole of this elaborate argument with respect to Melchizedek must be looked at in the light of the reference to Pa. cx. In quoting this psalm, the writer was on firm ground so far as his readers were concerned. They would not repudiate the significance of this utterance, that it must have some weighty, practical meaning; and it was his to show them what that meaning was, and so to cheer their hearts amid what so distressed them—the thought of having to give up entirely the ordinances of Judaism. There are the two orders of priesthood: the order of Aaron, and the order of Melchizedek. To the first of these the people attached great moment, and rightly so. The priest was a depositary of sacrificial commandments and practices, the temporary and defective nature of which were hidden by their long continuance. To use the common saying, "Possession was nine points of the law," and so it was needful to make them see very clearly how there was another order of priesthood, with more stability and power of service in it than anything the Aaronic priesthood could show. The Aaronic service, by showing its own insufficiency, was doing its best to prepare for the service after the order of Melchizedek. As to who Melchizedek really was, it is vain to inquire; and it is less needful to know because it is the office and not the man that is in question. Indeed, our very ignorance is part of the fitness of the type. Mysterious in his origin and his destiny, starting up all at once and as quickly disappearing, of whom we know nothing more than that he was a king and himself a priest, he becomes a very fitting type of that Priest who will never lay down his office while priesthood is needed. The abiding character of the priesthood of Jesus is the one great truth that we are to learn from all this comparison between Melchizedek and Aaron. The whole of this chapter was of supreme importance at the time, and it may

still have a large part to play in the bringing of Jews to Jesus; but it can hardly be pretended that it has the same importance to us.—Y.

Ver. 16.—*The power of an endless life.* We have here illustrated—

I. THE FEEBLENESS OF THAT WHICH DEPENDS UPON THE FLESH. Here the particular institution is that of priesthood; but the truth obtains with regard to all institutions dependent on the limits of fleshly human nature and the faculties of fallen human nature. The law of the Jewish priesthood was a law that had to take particular notice of the limitations of human life. The office was held by a man whose term of office at the longest was but brief, and his death had to be prepared for, and his successor duly initiated. That successor was a son, and who should say what sort of man he would turn out? There are certain things law can do and certain other things it cannot do. A law could be made setting apart a tribe for holy service, and a family for priestly service; but there the power stopped. No law can secure character. No law can secure willing, hearty, devoted service. Indeed, there might even be a show of fairness in men belonging to the tribe of Levi saying, "Why should we be tied down, willing or unwilling, to this work of the altar?" Note how *power* is contrasted in this verse with *law*, as much as to intimate the necessary feebleness of law. Its very strength in one direction helps to constitute its feebleness in another. It has nothing to fall back upon but the caprices and fluctuations of natural character. It brings to men knowledge, indeed; but, bringing that, brings only too often little but exasperation, irritation, depression. How many things there are in which the law of the fleshly commandment fails! The good king is succeeded by the bad one. The father uses his possession wisely; the son comes in to squander, neglect, and alienate. The father makes a fortune through frugality and industry; the son scatters it all to the winds.

II. THE CONTRASTED POWER OF THE ENDLESS LIFE. The Aaronic priest stands as the great representative of service limited by the necessary boundaries of human nature. Jesus stands forward as One whose service is unlimited save by the negligence or the unbelief of those whom he seeks to save. My fellow-man can only serve me as long as he is in the world, and even while in the world he may be cramped in many ways so that his service becomes an almost ineffectual thing. But Jesus has an endless, that is an indissoluble life. Duration is not the only thing to be thought of. There might be an immense duration of comparative uselessness. To say that the life is indissoluble means that its fulness continues unimpaired in the slightest degree. It is not a matter of ebbings and flowings; summer fulness of sap, and winter subsidence. Wherever we find death in the service of the brother man, we find life in the service of the Man Christ Jesus. It is so in his priesthood; so in his kingship; so in his teaching; so in his ministry.—Y.

Vers. 18, 19.—*The Law failing, the gospel succeeding.* It is very necessary here to turn from the ordinary version to the revised one, for the ordinary version utterly hides the antithesis which is the very essence of the meaning. On one side there is a disannulling of the Mosaic commandment with respect to priesthood, but on the other side there is the bringing in of a better hope. These two elements of the antithesis have, therefore, to be separately considered.

I. THE DISANNULLING OF THE FLESHLY COMMANDMENT. "The fleshly commandment," as it is called in ver. 16. A reason is given for the disannulling. The changes in the Divine economy are never arbitrary. Reasons are not always given for these changes; but when we can understand them they are given, and thus we are helped to believe in the wisdom of changes which we have not knowledge enough to understand. The reason has a twofold aspect. A general principle is stated, and there is a particular illustration of it. The general principle is that the Law makes nothing perfect, completes nothing; the particular illustration is found in the weakness and uselessness of the commandment which called into existence the Aaronic priesthood. No institution can plead a commandment of God for its existence when it has manifestly lost its use. The commandment was useless because it was weak; and then the uselessness reacted on the weakness and made it weaker still. Men ceased to look to the priesthood for any good and helpful thing, though the priesthood kept its formal place,

because there was nothing as yet to act as a substitute. Then the question may be asked—Why give a commandment which was weak and useless? The answer lies in that word “foregoing.” That which goes before implies something coming after. The Law was weak and useless for certain things, but not, therefore, weak and useless for all things. The Law came like light shining on human spiritual darkness, revealing dilapidation and corruption, and there it stopped; it showed the thing needing to be done, and in the very showing indicated how some agency would come in due time to do it.

II. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE BETTER HOPE. One notices a change of term here as in ver. 16. There we read of the former priest according to the *law* of a fleshly commandment, and the new abiding Priest according to the *power* of an indissoluble life. So here, that which is put away is a *commandment*; that which is brought in is a *hope*. The old commandment, weak and useless, left men in despair as far as their natural faculties were concerned. The new Priest steps upon the scene, needing no commandment. His functions are the appropriate outcome of the fulness of his life. And, coming among men, he comes as the visible immediate stimulator of hope. Manifestly he has relations with God, channels of connection with the Infinite Purity, such as not all the sum of Aaronic priests taken together had. As men drew near to some of the old priests, steeped in selfishness, pride, arrogance, they veritably drew nearer to the devil from whom it behoved them to flee; but drawing near to Jesus it was not possible that they should do anything else than in the same movement draw near to God.—Y.

Ver. 26.—*The Priest made separate from sinners.* I. THE DIFFERENCE IN THIS RESPECT BETWEEN THE PRIESTHOOD OF JESUS AND THE PRIESTHOOD OF AARON. The Aaronic priest was also made separate from sinners; but he was only separated officially. The separation lay in nothing more than natural descent and the wearing of priestly vestments. The Aaronic priest indicated in a feeble symbolic way what a true priest ought to be. In course of time, indeed, he might become separated from sinners in a way not to be desired, fenced round by an artificial sanctity, and superstitiously regarded as if he had in him nothing less than the Power of heaven and hell. But Jesus comes separated by nature, character, and by many outward manifestations of these things. The nearness of Jesus to men has already been insisted on; how he is a partaker of flesh and blood; how he is in all points tempted as men are. And what is then stated, in a collateral way, so that it may not be forgotten, is now, at the proper place, brought out and put to the front. Jesus is nearer to the universal man than any priest could be; but while so near there is a separation that goes to the very depths of being. This is what gives him his unique power. Moving among men, he hears their cries and prayers, sees their need; but he receives no infection from their narrowness, selfishness, degrading thoughts. Evil passes before him, but only to stir up into greatest activity his sympathy with those who suffer from the evil; that evil prevails not in the least over his own affections.

II. THE PRACTICAL RESULTS TO US OF THIS DIFFERENCE. 1. *His power to keep us is always manifest.* It is impossible to read about Jesus, to contemplate him in any attribute whatever, without being struck with the two united aspects of his person: first, association with us; and secondly, difference from us. We are drawn close to him because of the manifold fulness of his humanity; and then being drawn, we are made to feel how strong his hand is, and what a perennial Fountain of assistance and blessedness he becomes. 2. *We have always some one to look at, to lift us above cynical thoughts of mankind.* How easy it is to get into a way of saying that human nature is a very poor thing at its best! We cannot get the flaws and meannesses of even good men out of our recollection. Now here is the separated Man, the great High Priest, to show what a glorious thing human nature is when we can see it in its full purity. Jesus is not only pure himself, but he can purify the medium through which he is beheld. Those who come to see Jesus as he is, learn to think better and more hopefully both of themselves and others. 3. *The ideal is given which we are to seek and to reach.* The great High Priest stands in the midst of sinful men to whom he ministers, for the most practical purpose of making them like himself. He is separated from sinners in order that sinners, being transformed and perfected, may not be separated from him. When the ideal and real meet in one person, then the better hope is indeed brought in.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VIII.

CH. VIII. 1—X. 19.

THE HIGH PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST FULFILLS
THE SYMBOLISM OF THE AARONIC, AND IS
ALONE AN ETERNAL REALITY.

Christ's heavenly priesthood, shown above to be of a higher order than that of Aaron, destined to supersede it, is in this section of the Epistle (as intimated in the concluding verses of ch. vii.) set forth in full as the reality foreshadowed by it. The two priest-hoods are compared with respect to (1) their spheres, (2) their functions, (3) their effects; and, in the course of the exposition, the two covenants (*διαθήκαι*) to which they respectively belong are explained and contrasted.

Ver. 1.—Now the chief matter in (or, *in regard to*) the things which are being said is (or, *to sum up what we are saying*). The word *κεφάλαιον* in itself may mean either "summary" or "chief point." It is not "the sum of what we have spoken," as in A.V. "*Caput, id est præcipuum . . . dum hæc omnia de archisacerdote nostro dicimus, caput totius sermonis, ordine ita postulante, commemorandum venit. Conf. 4^o, ver. 6; ch. ix. 10, 15, 17; x. 28*" (Bengel). We have such a High Priest (i.e. such as has been described; cf. ch. vii. 26), who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty (or, *of Majesty*) in the heavens (cf. ch. i. 8, and what was there said).

Ver. 2.—A minister of the sanctuary (*τῶν ἁγίων, neuter*, as in ch. ix. 12, equivalent to "the holy places;" cf. ch. ix. 8; x. 19), and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. The sphere of Christ's priestly ministration (*ἱεραουργίας, ἱεραουργεῖν, ἱεραουργία*, being the recognized words in the LXX. and Josephus for denoting sacerdotal functions,—hence *Liturgy*) is thus in the first place pointed to as being a heavenly one, symbolized only by the earthly sanctuary. But what is the true tabernacle, in which Christ ministers? Are we to suppose that an actual prototype of the earthly tabernacle is regarded as existing locally beyond the sky? No; it is only implied that there are, in the suprasensuous sphere, facts and relations which are symbolized and made level to our comprehension by local imagery. Still, there may be conceived as present to the writer's mind an ideal picture of a heavenly temple, such as was seen in vision by prophets, and served to aid

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their conception of realities beyond their ken. Thus in Ps. xxix., where the thunderstorm is described, the Lord is conceived, in the introductory and concluding verses, as enthroned above it in his heavenly temple, sitting there a King for ever, and worshipped by the "sons of God." Thus in 1 Kings xxii. 19 Michaiah sees in vision "the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him, on his right hand and on his left." In Isa. vi. this throne is seen as the distinct counterpart of the mercy-seat in the earthly temple, with the winged forms above it, and the "house" filled with the smoke of incense, and live coals upon the altar. Ezekiel's still more remarkable visions (ch. i., x., xi.) are in like manner enlargements of the idea of the Shechinah in the holy of holies (cf. also Ps. xi. 4; Micah i. 2; Hab. ii. 20). Then the visions of St. John in the Revelation have the same basis; there is still seen a glorious counterpart above of the temple below; though now with new accessories, expressive of accomplished redemption. But that St. John's visions are meant only as imagery representing the incomprehensible is evident throughout, and especially from the ideal description of the holy city in Rev. xxi., in which ver. 22 is peculiarly significant: "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." In the same way is to be understood the "true tabernacle." If, as we may suppose, the writer had before his mind the prophetic visions of such a heavenly temple, he entertains them only as imaging spiritual facts and relations in the regions of eternity. "Which the Lord pitched," etc., may have reference to Isa. xlii. 5, 'Ο κτίσας τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τῆξας αὐτόν, LXX.

Vers. 3, 4.—For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this one also have somewhat to offer. For (rather, *may*; the reading *μὲν οὖν* being better supported than the Textus Receptus *μὲν γὰρ*) if he were on earth, he would not even be a priest, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law. These verses are in proof of the assertion of ver. 2, viz. that Christ has his ministry in the heavenly tabernacle. He has been shown to be a High Priest: therefore he must make some offering, this being the very purpose of a high priest's office (cf. ch. v. 1). But where? Not certainly in the earthly tabernacle, this being served already, and exclusively served, by the sons of Aaron. Therefore it must be in the heavenly sphere

symbolized by the earthly tabernacle. And then, in ver. 5, that there is a heavenly reality, of which the earthly tabernacle is but a shadow, is shown by what was said of the latter when it was made. (What Christ offers in the heavenly sphere is surely his own atoning sacrifice. Some commentators have found a difficulty in this conception on the ground that this his sacrifice had been completed once for all before his ascension. True; but he is regarded as carrying its efficacy with him to the mercy-seat above, and so for ever offering it; even as it is continually commemorated and pleaded in the Eucharist by the Church below. And thus, be it observed, the symbolism of the Day of Atonement is accurately fulfilled. For the high priest did not sacrifice within the tabernacle; he only carried to the holy of holies the blood, representing the atoning efficacy of the sacrifice made outside before his entrance.)

Ver. 5.—Who (i.e. being such as do so; *στρωτες*) serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things (*σκιόγραμα* here, as in ch. ix. 23, means “representation,” in the way of copy, not of pattern. “Shadow” (*σκιὰ*) is opposed in ch. x. 1 to *εἰκὼν*, which denotes the reality, and in Col. ii. 17 to *εἰκῶν*), even as Moses is admonished of God when about to make the tabernacle (literally, to complete; but not in the sense of finishing a thing begun, but of carrying out a design to entire completion); for, see, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount. For the sense of *κεχρημάτισται*, according to Hellenistic usage, cf. Matt. ii. 22, “Being warned of God in a dream (*χρηματισθείς δὲ κατ’ ὄραμα*).” The reference here is to Exod. xxv. 40; the words which “the LORD spake unto Moses.” Rabbinical writers, holding the view of an actual heavenly tabernacle, the prototype of the earthly one, have concluded from the passage in Exodus that Moses had a vision of it, or that a visible representation of it was exhibited to him on the mount. All that is necessarily implied is that he was divinely admonished to make the tabernacle after the fashion conveyed, in whatever way, to his apprehension when on the mount, so that it might be a true representation of some heavenly reality (cf. Acts vii. 44).

Ver. 6.—But now (*νῦν* in its usual logical, not temporal, sense; cf. ch. xi. 16; also ii. 8; ix. 26; xii. 26) hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the Mediator of a better covenant, which (*ἑταῖς*, equivalent to *quippeque*, as usual) hath been established upon better promises. Here the idea of the new *διαθήκη*, introduced first in the way of anticipation at ch. vii. 22, is brought to the front, to be carried out in what follows. There the proved superior

greatness of the predicted priest was made the measure of the superior excellence of the covenant of which he has become Surety; here the superior excellence of the new covenant, which is now to be shown from prophecy, is made the measure of that of Christ's priestly ministry, which has just been proved to be of necessity in the sphere of heavenly realities of which the Mosaic ritual was but a copy and shadow. The word here used is not *ἑγγυος* (“surety”), as in ch. vii. 22, but *μεσίτης* (“mediator”); on which it is to be observed that the mediator of the old covenant was not Aaron, but Moses (see Gal. iii. 19): it was he that intervened between God and the congregation in the establishment of the covenant; and thus, in this respect also, the priesthood of the new covenant transcends the old one, in that (as was shown also in the earlier part of the Epistle) the type of Moses, as well as of Aaron, is fulfilled in it. The word *πεποιτισμένη* (“established” in A.V.; “enacted” in the recent R.V.) expresses the promulgation of a law—appositely in the first place to the Law of Moses, which constituted the conditions of the old covenant; but also to the description of the new covenant, which follows from Jeremiah, according to which the law remains, but to be written on the heart. The gospel is elsewhere regarded under the idea of law, though not a law of bondage, but of liberty—a law, not of the letter, but of the Spirit (see Rom. iii. 27; viii. 2; ix. 31; Jas. i. 25). The “better promises” are such as the passage from Jeremiah, quoted below, notably represents. Other passages might be referred to (such as Ezek. xxxvi. 25, etc.; xxxvii. 24, etc.), of similar significance, though not with the same marked mention of a new covenant to supersede the old one. This memorable passage (Jer. xxxi. 31-35) occurs in a distinct section of Jeremiah's prophecies (xxx., xxxi.), delivered after the commencement of the Captivity, and directed to be written in a book. The subject of the whole section is the restoration of Israel, its ultimate Messianic reference being patent to all who acknowledge any such at all in prophecy. In evidence of this there is not only the passage before us, pointing to an entirely new covenant with Israel, and the ideal tone of the whole prophecy, but also, in particular, the view of all the scattered tribes, not Judah only—the whole ideal Israel—being gathered together from all countries to Zion, and of David himself to rule over them as king. The national and local framework, which the picture has in common with other prophetic visions of the coming days, is of course no difficulty to those familiar with the style of the prophetic books.

Ver. 7.—For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for a second. "For" introduces this sentence as a reason for what has been already said; i.e. for a *better* covenant having been spoken of. The expression might be objected to by Hebrew readers as implying imperfection in the original Divine covenant. "Nay," says the writer, "it was imperfect, it was *not* faultless; for prophecy itself declares this." Should it be further objected that in the prophecy it is not the old covenant itself that is found fault with, but the people for not observing it, the answer would be that the remedy for their non-observance being the substitution of a new one that would answer its purpose better, some imperfection in the old one is implied. This is indeed the very point of this verse. If it be asked, further, how faultiness in the old covenant is compatible with the view of its Divine origin, the answer is abundantly supplied in St. Paul's Epistles. His position constantly is that the Mosaic Law, though in itself "holy, just, and true," and adequate to its purpose, was still imperfect as a means of justification. It was but a temporary dispensation, with a purpose of its own, intervening between the original promise to Abraham and the fulfilment of that promise in Christ. Thus it is no derogation to itself or to its Author to charge it with "weakness and unprofitableness" for a purpose it was never meant to answer.

Vers. 8—12.—For finding fault with them (i.e. the people), he saith (or, as some take it, *finding fault, he saith to them*), Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will accomplish upon the house of Israel and the house of Judah a new covenant: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. The passage is quoted from the LXX., with a few verbal differences which do not affect the meaning. In ver. 9 our A.V. renders the original in Jeremiah "although I was an Husband unto them," instead of "and I regarded them not (*καὶ ἡμέλησα αὐτῶν*)."

The LXX., followed in the text, gives the

more probable meaning. On the whole passage be it observed: 1. "Behold, the days come," like "in that day," is a usual prophetic phrase for denoting the age of the Messiah. 2. The failure of the old covenant is attributed in the first place to the people's not continuing in it, and then, as a consequence, to the Lord's withdrawal of his protection. The evidence of such withdrawal immediately before the prophet's view may be supposed to have been the Babylonian captivity. 3. The distinguishing characteristics of the new covenant are (1) God's laws, not imposed as an external code, but put into the mind and written on the heart; (2) the general knowledge of the Lord by small as well as great, without the former need of continual admonition; and (3) as the originating and inspiring cause of all, the forgiveness on the Lord's part of past sins. It is important to perceive that this last characteristic of the new covenant, though coming last in order, is given as the reason for the other two; for this is a first principle of the gospel. The sense of forgiveness through Christ, of acceptance in the Beloved, is ever set forth as the inspiring principle of the obedience of Christians. "We love him, because he first loved us." And hence flow the two results denoted in the prophecy. (1) "I will put my laws," etc.; i.e. there will ensue, through the inspiring Spirit, from the sense of forgiveness in Christ, a hearty service of love and loyalty; no mere mechanical observance of an external code. Then, (2) "And they shall not teach," etc.; i.e. those who thus, led by the Spirit, give themselves to such hearty service, will acquire, further, an immediate, and as it were instinctive, "knowledge of the Lord," not confined to "the wise" or "the scribe," but the personal privilege of even the "little ones" of Christ (cf. Matt. xi. 25, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes;" also John vi. 45, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God;" also 1 Thess. iv. 9, "But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another;" also 1 John ii. 20, "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things"). It is not to be inferred (as has been) from this last result that a distinct order of ministry is no essential constituent of the Christian Church for admonition of others. The fact that such a ministry was constituted from the first in all the Churches, and was in active operation when apostles wrote as above, is in itself sufficient disproof of such a view. All that is implied is that all faithful

believers, small as well as great (using, of course, the means of grace and edification provided for them in the Church), should themselves have inward illumination and personal communion with God. This is indeed a peculiar glory of the Christian religion. The poorest and the simplest believer may have spiritual perceptions and spiritual experience of his own, surpassing those of his appointed guides, and remaining his own though priests and teachers be unfaithful. "I am small and despised" (may the Christian, still more than the ancient psalmist, say), "yet do not I forget thy precepts." "I have more understanding than all my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditation." Observe, lastly, the ideality of the whole view given of the effects of the new covenant. It presents to us the purpose, the potentiality, of the new dispensation, rather than results to be fully realized in this world; though still actually realized so far as the "glorious light of the gospel" illuminates the Church, and is allowed to "shine into" the human heart. This remark applies to all Messianic prophecy.

Ver. 13.—In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away. "He hath made the first old" (*παλαιότερον*) refers to the time of Jeremiah's prophecy, not of the writing of the Epistle. The very mention

of a new covenant had even then antiquated the other. It thenceforth survived only under the category of *old* as opposed to *new*; and further marked with the growing decrepitude which is the precursor of dissolution. This further idea is expressed by the present participle *παλαιούμενον* (elsewhere applied to garments that are wearing out; cf. Pa. cii. 27; ch. i. 11; Isa. l. 9; li. 6; Luke xii. 33), and also by *γηράσκον*, a figure taken from the advance of old age in men. When the Epistle was written, it would not have been spoken of as "waxing old," but as defunct. The temple, indeed, was still standing, with the old ritual going on; but it had become but as the stately shrine of a lifeless thing. As to the view of the antiquation having begun even in the prophetic age, we observe that the prophets themselves show a consciousness of this, in that their growing tendency is to depreciate rather than exalt the ceremonial Law, and to put mercy above sacrifice. In fact, the Old Testament itself, especially in its later parts, is replete with the principles of the new covenant, anticipated in part, though not to be fully revealed till Christ appeared. And so, when he did appear, the old dispensation had already become obsolete, and the new one prepared for; to be rejected in Israel by those only who, "in the reading of the Old Testament," had "the veil upon their heart."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—6.—*The chief point.* This passage does not present a recapitulation of the topics already considered; it emphasizes, as the crowning topic in connection with our Lord's priesthood, the fact that he has been "made higher than the heavens."

I. THE HEAVENLY MAJESTY OF OUR HIGH PRIEST. (Ver. 1.) He dwells now in heaven, his native home. He occupies there the loftiest place; for he shares the sovereign authority and the universal dominion of the absolute God. Aaron exercised his priesthood in an earthly sanctuary made by men's hands; Christ officiates as our High Priest in the eternal uncreated heavens. Aaron, when he entered the holy of holies once a year on the great Jewish fast-day, merely *stood* for a short time before the symbolic throne—his attitude one of lowly service; but Christ has "*sat down*" at the right hand of the Eternal—his attitude that of royal government. It is noticeable that in this treatise the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus does not receive the prominence which is given to it in almost every Epistle of Paul. Indeed, it is only once mentioned (ch. xiii. 20). But doubtless the reason of this is to be found in the unique design of the treatise. This book alone, of all the books of Scripture, expounds the doctrine of the priesthood of Christ; and it brings into the foreground, accordingly, only those acts which he performed as the Antitype of Aaron—his sacrifice of himself in the outer court of this world, and his passing within the blue veil of heaven to sprinkle his blood upon the mercy-seat. So the writer dwells only upon the death and the ascension of the Saviour.

II. HIS HEAVENLY MINISTRY. (Vers. 2—6.) The ministry of the Redeemer is not incompatible with his majesty; for he performs it as the Plenipotentiary of the God-head, and in virtue of his session at "the right hand of the throne." The heavenly sanctuary in which Christ officiates is here contrasted with the Hebrew sanctuary. We

are reminded that the Mosaic tabernacle and its ritual were nothing more than an adumbration of the realities of the true tabernacle. They were only a shadowy prophecy of the priestly ministry of the Lord Jesus. The very furniture of the sacred tent had a symbolic meaning; and every article was formed after a Divine "pattern" (ver. 5)—the snuffers and incense-spoons as well as the magnificent lamp-stand. But how different the scene of Christ's continual intercession from the Jewish tabernacle or temple! Having offered himself as a Sacrifice upon the altar of burnt offering which had been set up on Calvary, he had to appear within the sanctuary of God with his atoning blood. Not being, however, a high priest after the order of Aaron, he could not go for this purpose into the temple at Jerusalem; so, if he was to continue to be "a Priest at all" (ver. 4), it behoved him to seek another temple. Jesus accordingly ascended to heaven, "the true tabernacle;" and he carries on his ministry there in "the sanctuary," i.e. in the holy of holies which belongs to that true tabernacle (ver. 2). The Levitical high priests were but typical mediators, who performed typical services in connection with a typical sanctuary. Jesus is the anti-typical High Priest, who has offered a real sacrifice for sin, and who makes prevailing intercession for his people within the true archetypal tabernacle. His ministry, therefore, is "more excellent" than Aaron's.

LESSONS. 1. For the *materialist*. The Mosaic tabernacle was a "copy" of the celestial sanctuary; but are not all nature and all earthly relations just an adumbration of the unseen?

"What if earth
Be but the shadow of heaven, and things therein
Each to other like, more than on earth is thought?"
(Milton.)

2. For the *sacerdotalist*. Jesus is the one mediating Priest of the New Testament Church; and even he is no longer a sacrificing Priest. He bled and died in the outer court; and he mediates in "the sanctuary" now by intercession. 3. For the *formalist*. How great the guilt of the man who, while professing to be a Christian, does not make the priesthood of Christ a main theme of his thoughts, and the joy of his heart! 4. For the *Christian believer*. The saint should more and more rejoice in Jesus as his Priest, and constantly re-commit his soul into his hands, to be introduced to God by him. 5. For the *gospel minister*. While the teaching of the pulpit ought to range, as far as possible, over the wide sweep of thought which is embraced in the orbit of the Bible, the doctrine of the mediation of our glorified Redeemer must be its "chief point"—the key-stone of all its utterances, whether evangelical or ethical.

Vers. 6—13.—*The new covenant*. Here we have another of the broad contrasts which everywhere meet us in this treatise. In those Epistles which are undoubtedly Paul's, the process of reasoning resembles the movement of a *file* of soldiers; but in this to the Hebrews, the movement resembles rather that of soldiers in *rank*. The writer introduces his contrast between the covenants with the remark (ver. 6) that our Lord's heavenly ministry as greatly excels that of Aaron as the new covenant which he administers is superior to the old.

I. THE OLD COVENANT WAS IMPERFECT. "That first covenant" (ver. 7) does not refer to the covenant of works, which was made with Adam in Eden; but to the Mosaic dispensation of the economy of grace. This covenant had been solemnly inaugurated and accepted by the Jews at the foot of Mount Sinai (Exod. xxiv. 4—8); and it had been repeatedly renewed in later times (Josh. xxiv. 24, 25; 2 Chron. xv. 12; 2 Kings xi. 17; 2 Chron. xxix.; Neh. ix., x.). It was not "faultless;" that is, it was imperfect as a dispensation of grace. The Mosaic institutions were only preparatory to those of gospel times. They were legal rather than evangelical, and sensuous rather than spiritual. They were suited to the nonage of the Church; and "Israel was a child" when God "took him by the hand to lead him forth out of the land of Egypt" (ver. 9; Hos. xi. 1—4). So Judaism taught spiritual truth only in faint outline. Its method was that of spectacular representation. The Law was "our tutor to bring us unto Christ" (Gal. iii. 24).

II. A PROPHECY OF THE NEW COVENANT. In order to prove from the Jewish Scrip-

tures the imperfection of the "first" covenant, and to describe the "better promises" of the "new" and final covenant, the writer quotes a most striking passage from the Book of Jeremiah (xxxi. 31—34). This oracle was given when the Jews of Judah were on the brink of the Babylonish captivity, to comfort their desolate hearts with the cheering hope of Messianic times. The chosen people had not "continued" in God's covenant; and, because they had broken it, he had "regarded them not" (ver. 9), but allowed first Israel, and afterwards Judah, to be carried into exile. But Jeremiah is commissioned to announce that, notwithstanding all, God in his wonderful mercy "will make a new covenant" (ver. 8), with the whole Hebrew nation. The twelve tribes shall again become one rod in his hand. And all Gentiles, who by faith, belong to the true Israel, shall share the blessing.

III. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEW COVENANT. What are the "better promises"? Jeremiah's oracle mentions three. 1. *The Law written on the heart.* (Ver. 10.) The child is controlled by positive external precept; the man by moral and spiritual principle. During the pupilage of the Church, the Divine laws were written "in tables of stone;" but, now that the Church has come to manhood, they are inscribed "in tables that are hearts of flesh" (2 Cor. iii. 3). The ascendancy of ritualism in any Christian Church means, therefore, a return to the "childish things" of the old covenant—a going back to the swaddling-clothes of religious babyhood. 2. *The universal knowledge of God.* (Ver. 11.) During the Jewish dispensation, the average Jew had only an exceedingly dim apprehension of religious truth, whether about God or the way to him, or about holiness or immortality. But, under the new covenant, spiritual truth shall become the longer the more clearly perceived, and the more widely diffused. For now the Holy Spirit is the great Teacher of the Church; and he does not impart esoteric instruction to some special caste, but teaches every believer "from the least to the greatest." What, then, is modern ritualism, but a return to the dim vision of the old economy? It is the use of candles—sometimes literally—in broad daylight. 3. *The full forgiveness of sins.* (Ver. 12.) This "promise," although introduced last, precedes the other two in actual bestowment. Sin must be pardoned and cleansed away before the Law can be written on the heart, or the mind flooded with spiritual light. None of the Levitical sacrifices could expiate moral guilt; but on the basis of Christ's atonement God now imparts that forgiveness which is the precedent condition of moral renewal and of a holy life (Ps. cxxx. 4).

CONCLUSION. God said at Sinai, in setting up the "first" covenant, "Thou shalt not" (Exod. xx. 3—17); but now, in ordering the new covenant, his words are, "I will" (vers. 10—12). And what does this change of language imply? "I will" really points to the effusion and diffusion of the Holy Spirit. He was poured out on the day of Pentecost, the anniversary of the giving of the Law from Mount Sinai. It is his presence within the New Testament Church that makes the new covenant so vastly superior to the old. We should ask ourselves whether our souls individually are sharing the blessings of the gospel dispensation. We must remember also that the "better promises" imply on our part definite duties and great responsibilities. And, as regards the world, we must be persuaded that only the general acceptance of the new covenant will extirpate by the roots the enormous evils which still afflict society.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 6.—*Three better things.* "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry," etc. In these words the writer states in brief what he at once proceeds to illustrate and establish at considerable length, from this point on to ch. x. 18. We may perhaps with advantage take a general glance at these three better things, leaving their particular examination until summoned to it by the development of the Epistle.

I. THE BETTER MINISTRY. "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry" than the high priests of the Jewish Church. The proposition of the text is that our Lord's ministry is as much better than theirs as the new covenant is better than the old, and the new covenant is better than the old because it has been enacted upon better promises. His ministry is that of our great High Priest, or, in the word used in the text, our Mediator. Let us mention a few particulars in which this ministry of his

is more excellent than that of the Jewish high priests. 1. *Because it is exercised in a higher sphere.* They ministered in the material tabernacle and temple, and for a brief season once a year were permitted to enter the holy of holies where God manifested his presence by a symbol; but these were only copies and shadows of the heavenly realities. Our Saviour is a Minister of the heavenly "sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man." He "appears before the face of God for us." 2. *Because it extends to greater numbers.* The ministry of the Jewish high priests was exercised for the Jews only. It was limited to their own race, and to the proselytes to their religion. But the ministry of Jesus Christ is for all mankind. He "tasted death for every man." He is the "Mediator between God and men" of every nationality, and every race, and every age, etc. 3. *Because it is enduring.* The ministry of individual Jewish high priests ended at their death, if not before; and that ministry as an institution waxed old and vanished away. But the ministry of our great High Priest is of perpetual vitality and efficacy. His mediation will never be superseded, never lose its attractiveness and glory, until man is fitted to approach God without a mediator. 4. *Because it secures richer results.* These results, or some of them at least, are referred to in the "better promises." The results of the ministry of the Aaronic priesthood, like its functions, were to a great extent symbolic and shadowy rather than essential and real. But through the ministry of the Christ we obtain real benefits and essential blessings: e.g. reconciliation with God, forgiveness, etc.

II. THE BETTER COVENANT. "He is the Mediator of a better covenant." But what are we to understand by the word "covenant"? As used in human relations it denotes a compact or agreement between two or more parties, who are equal, each of whom has the right to propose alterations in the terms of the compact, and to accept or reject such terms. In this sense there can be no covenant between God and man; for there is no equality between the parties, and man cannot reject any requirement of God without committing sin. Perhaps it is for this reason that the word which strictly signifies covenant is not used in the New Testament. But as applied to God and man the "covenant" denotes his method of revealing himself to men, and his will concerning their salvation, his arrangement of agencies and means and conditions by which they may be saved. "The word 'covenant' becomes appropriate in view of the solemn assent and consent with which man accepts God's proposal, involved in his scheme or plan. In this context the 'old covenant' is the scheme revealed to Israel under Moses; the 'new' is the gospel scheme involving the gift and work of both the Son and the Spirit of God." The old covenant was good, as our text implies. It originated in the grace of God. It involved on his part condescension towards man. It was designed and fitted to benefit and bless and save man. It promised life and blessing to those who complied with its terms; and its promises were true. But the new covenant is very much better than the old. This will appear when we come to notice the "better promises." At present we mention only two aspects of its superiority. 1. *It presents a more spiritual revelation of the character and will of God.* Under the old covenant nearly everything was expressed by means of material forms and symbols—nearly everything appealed to the senses. Its laws, its ritual, its promised blessings, pertained largely to the visible, the sensuous, and the temporal. It was a revelation suited to the childhood and youth of our race. But the new covenant gives us a more spiritual manifestation of the Divine mind and will; it is a revelation for the manhood of our race. It proclaims the spirituality of God and of his worship. It writes the Divine law upon men's hearts. It promises spiritual blessings. 2. *It is a fuller expression of the grace of God.* (Cf. John i. 14—18; Rom. iii. 24; v. 21; vi. 14.) The next division of our subject will show us that there is more of Divine grace manifested in the new than in the old covenant.

III. THE BETTER PROMISES. "A better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises." The promises which the writer has chiefly in view are those mentioned in vers. 10—12. Let us mention some of these better promises of the new covenant. 1. *It proffers strength to comply with its own conditions.* The old covenant promised blessings to the obedient; the new promises blessings to enable us to render obedience. The Holy Spirit is promised to incline our hearts to the good, to strengthen us for duty, etc. 2. *Justification for the sinner on condition of faith in Jesus Christ.* (Cf. Rom. iii. 20—26; x. 5—10; Gal. iii. 10—14.) 3. *Sanctification of the believer by the Holy Spirit.*

(Cf. John xiv. 16—18, 26; xv. 26; xvi. 7—15; Rom. xv. 13, 16; 2 Cor. iii. 18.) 4. *Glorification of his people for ever in the future state.* (Cf. Rom. viii. 17, 18, 30; 2 Cor. iv. 17; 2 Tim. ii. 10; 1 Pet. v. 10.) Verily, these are better promises than those of the old covenant. And the covenant to which they belong is far better than the old one. By so much, also, is our Lord's ministry better than that of the Aaronic high priests. Let us give earnest heed to secure our personal interest in this new and "better covenant."—W. J.

Ver. 10.—*Law and love in the new covenant.* "For this is the covenant that I will make," etc. The paragraph from which our text is taken is a quotation from Jer. xxxi. 31—34. It is said that the Lord "will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah;" but this is spoken, not of Israel according to the flesh, but of the spiritual Israel—the spiritual seed of Abraham (cf. Rom. ii. 28, 29; ix. 6—8; Gal. iii. 7—9). Notice—

I. THE REVELATION OF LAW IN THE NEW COVENANT. One of the great distinctions between the two covenants arises from the materiality of the old one and the spirituality of the new one. In nothing is this more manifest than in the matter of Law. Law is present in both of them. But in the old it was engraved upon tables of stone; in the new it is written upon the hearts of men. Under the old the people were led "by the hand," guided by visible symbols; under the new they are led by the heart, guided by spiritual influences. Our text sets forth certain aspects of Law in the new covenant. 1. *Law present in the mind.* "I will put my laws into their mind." In the former dispensation Law was spoken to the outward ear, it was made visible to the bodily eye; and so given, it was often soon neglected and forgotten. But in the present dispensation, to those who have by faith entered into covenant relation with God, Law is given as a possession of their spiritual nature. It is not external to them, but is present within their minds as a rule of action and as a theme for meditation. 2. *Law treasured in the heart.* "And on their heart also will I write them." When a thing is highly esteemed by us, or when a cause has awakened our deep interest, we say with propriety that it lies near our heart. With greater emphasis and deeper significance do we say the same of one whom we love. So in the new covenant Law holds a high place; it is prized and loved. It is loved as being good in itself. "The Law is holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good." It is loved, also, as being the expression of our Father's will. There were instances under the old covenant in which the Law was loved and delighted in, but they were rare exceptions to the general rule. Under the new covenant the Law of the Lord will be increasingly prized and loved and obeyed. 3. *Law embodied in the life.* "Out of the heart are the issues of life." Writing the Law upon the heart is a pictorial way of expressing the inspiration of a disposition to obey Law. God will give his people courage to profess his laws, "and power to put them in practice; the whole habit and frame of their souls shall be a table and transcript of the Law of God." The Law which they love in their heart they will express in their lives. This is the highest revelation of Law. It is most effective in relation to the individual; it is most clear in relation to others, and most influential also. This revelation is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is he who illumines the mind, inspires the heart, etc.

II. THE EXPRESSION OF LOVE IN THE NEW COVENANT. "And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." We do not mean to imply that the giving of the Law unto the minds and hearts of God's people was not an expression of his love; for such in truth it was. But here is a brighter manifestation of his love. Notice: 1. *God's relation to the Christian.* "I will be to them a God." He will be to them all that they could desire and expect to find in their God. He gives himself as the chief blessing of the new covenant. He will be to his people "as great, as wise, as powerful, as good as he is in himself." We have all things in him (1 Cor. iii. 21—23). We have his wisdom for our direction, his power for our protection, his love for our spiritual satisfaction and joy, his Spirit for our instruction, consolation, and sanctification, his heaven for our abiding and blessed home. A whole library dealing with these words could not fully express the number and preciousness of the blessings which are comprehended in them—"I will be to them a God." 2. *The Christian's relation to God.* "And they shall be to me a people." This is set forth as our privilege; and

a great one it is. But the privilege has its obligations. If by faith in Jesus Christ we have entered into this covenant relation with God, we have the right to expect its blessings from him, and we are solemnly bound to fulfil its duties to him. Our duty to which the covenant binds us includes (1) supreme affection to God; (2) reverent worship of him; (3) hearty consecration to his service; (4) cheerful compliance with his will. May we be enabled both to perform the duties and to enjoy the privileges of this gracious covenant.—W. J.

Vers. 11, 12.—*Knowledge and mercy in the new covenant.* “And they shall not teach every man his neighbour,” etc.

I. MAN'S KNOWLEDGE OF GOD UNDER THE NEW COVENANT. “And they shall not teach every man his fellow-citizen, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord,” etc. We have here: 1. *The highest subject of knowledge.* “The Lord: all shall know me.” “This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God,” etc. This knowledge is: (1) Sublimest in its character. There is no knowledge so exalted as this. Knowledge of astronomy is a high attainment; but it is not to be compared with knowledge of him who made the stars and all worlds, and who sustains them and presides over them. (2) Widest in its extent. He is infinite, and can never be fully known by man: “The knowledge of God and of Christ,” says Dr. Harris, “is the sum of all science; this is the only knowledge that can incorporate and mingle with our being; and all other knowledge is real only so far as it is symbolical of this.” (3) Mightiest in its moral influence. It transforms the character of those who possess it (cf. 2 Cor. iii. 18). 2. *The purest source of knowledge.* The obligation of men under the old covenant to impart to each other the knowledge of God is implied in the text. This obligation is not abolished under the new covenant; but there is less need for such private instruction because of the frequent public services of qualified ministers of the gospel. Moreover, the text undoubtedly refers to the communication of knowledge by the Holy Spirit. “The agency of the Holy Ghost is assumed under this covenant as ‘the Spirit of truth,’ the supreme and most vital Teacher of this true knowledge of God. For the covenant, taken in the large sense of a system of agencies, is definitely and certainly *the gospel age* as distinguished from the Mosaic; and of this gospel age or dispensation, the gift of the Holy Ghost, to teach, impress, and enforce the true knowledge of God, is the centre and the soul, even as Jesus is the centre and soul of the Christian economy considered as ‘the Propitiation for our sins,’ and our great High Priest before the throne of God. The results as given here come of *his* teaching and of no other” (H. Cowles, D.D.). This knowledge does not spring from mere human conjecture, or imagination, or investigation, or ratiocination; but from spiritual revelation. “All thy children shall be taught of the Lord.” “Ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things” (1 John ii. 20, 27). 3. *The clear apprehension of knowledge.* Proceeding from so crystalline a source, the stream will be clear. If our mind and heart be free from prejudice, then the instruction concerning God which we receive from the Word and the Spirit will be clear and correct; what we know of him we shall know truly. 4. *The wide diffusion of knowledge.* “All shall know me, from the least to the greatest of them.” Primarily the “all” refers to the “people” (ver. 10) of God: all of them shall know him. But eventually there shall be a universal diffusion of the knowledge of God. This the sacred Scriptures distinctly affirm (Matt. xxiv. 14; xxviii. 19; Luke xxiv. 47; Rev. xiv. 6).

II. GOD'S MERCY TO MAN UNDER THE NEW COVENANT. “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins,” etc. Under the new covenant God manifests his rich grace in the way in which he forgives sin. We have here: 1. *The source of forgiveness.* “I will be merciful.” Forgiveness does not spring from man's repentance, but from God's mercy. Repentance is a condition of forgiveness, but the grace of God is its source. Apart from his grace repentance is impossible unto us. “By grace are ye saved,” etc. (cf. Eph. ii. 7—10). 2. *The fulness of forgiveness.* He pardons “their iniquities and their sins.” He cleanses “from all unrighteousness.” “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” None are too numerous, none too aggravated, etc. (cf. Isa. i. 18; lv. 7). 3. *The irrevocableness of forgiveness.* “Their sins will I remember no more.” Strictly speaking, the Infinite Mind cannot forget anything. But God forgives so completely that the sins are as it were buried in

deep oblivion. His forgiveness is irrevocable. This inspiring truth is repeatedly and impressively expressed in the Bible (Pa. ciii. 12; Isa. xxxviii. 17; xlii. 25; xlii. 22; Micah vii. 19). This rich, abounding mercy is the reason of man's fuller, clear knowledge of God. There was mercy in the old covenant, but in that it was not pre-eminent as in the new one. The chief feature of that was Law; the chief feature of this is grace. Forgiveness leads to gratitude and love to the Forgiver; and love leads to the clearer, wider knowledge of him. If you would know God truly, intimately, deeply, you must love him.—W. J.

Ver. 13.—*Decaying and departing.* "Now that which decayeth and waxeth old," etc. In these words the writer states a general principle of which the old covenant was an illustration. That covenant was relatively old, because a new one had been introduced; it was also absolutely old, and had not "in itself the strength to exist much longer." When anything arrives at that condition its end is not far off—it "is nigh unto vanishing away." Let us indicate a few of the applications of this principle. It is applicable to—

I. FORMS OF RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION. In our text it is thus applied to the Mosaic economy. Many of our present religious forms—forms of Church government and forms of worship—are of human origin. If they are vital and suit the circumstances and conditions of this age, let them be maintained; but if they do not, and cannot be made to do so, by all means let them go. In fact, a living Church will certainly put off its dead forms by the natural expression of its life. The late A. J. Scott says wisely and beautifully, "True reverence for antiquity seeks a Church presenting the clearest image of eternity in the midst of the mutations of time. This she is to do by the inward vigour of the essential principles of her life, dropping off forms no longer useful, as the oak has done the leaves of last summer. The live oak abides the same by its vitality, while it changes form and dimensions by growth: the mass of squared timber has lost its power of assimilation, its command of resources; death enables it to remain unchanged in form, till death brings decay that changes form and substance. What is dead is changed from without; what lives changes from within." And Dr. Huntington forcibly says, "When religious forms have first been devised, a certain freshness of conviction has gone into them that has made them vital. But presently the life has refused to stand and stagnate in these cisterns, and so ebbed away and sought out new channels. The mistake has been that the forms have insisted on standing, after the life within was gone; and accordingly their figure has been that of wooden vessels shrunk and dried in the sun." Now, where the vitality has gone, let the form go also; for, as Carlyle says, "the old never dies till all the soul of good that was in it has got itself transfused into the practical new." Let the dead forms pass away—

"For who would keep an ancient form
Through which the spirit breathes no more?"

(Tennyson.)

II. FORMS OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF. Much that is said above on religious organizations is equally applicable to religious creeds. As Mr. J. A. Froude puts it, "While the essence of religion remains the same, the mode in which it is expressed changes and has changed—changes as living languages change and become dead, as institutions change, as forms of government change, as opinions on all things in heaven and earth change, as half the theories held at this time among ourselves will probably change—that is, the outward and mortal part of them." The living faith of the Church may need restatement. The language in which man's apprehension of the great verities of the gospel was expressed in past ages may become stiff, cold, unexpressive, and obsolete as regards the apprehension of those verities in this age. Then let it go. And reverently in the living language of to-day, let the living faith of to-day be expressed. The living faith—that is the great thing. "A living doctrine never need advertise for a body, nor go carefully about to invent one, any more than a young oak needs to advertise for a trunk and branches. God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him. Get the faith, and it will shape a form of its own."

III. HUMAN LIFE IN THIS WORLD. If life be so far prolonged, the time comes when

the human form becomes old and waxeth aged and is nigh unto vanishing away. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten," etc. (Ps. xc. 10). When the earthly house of our tabernacle is worn out we know that it will soon be dissolved. The departing vitality tells us that the body itself will soon vanish away. Its decrepitude heralds its disappearance. This is a reason: 1. *Why the aged should live in readiness for their departure hence.* 2. *Why the aged should be treated with considerate kindness.* Their age has a claim upon our respect, unless its character forbids respect, and then it should elicit our pity. Their feebleness makes its silent and touching appeal to us for support. And they will soon be beyond our sight and our services. By the help of God let us seek so to live that, when the time of our departure draws near, we may be ready to leave this world, having finished our work, and to enter upon the, to us, unknown future, having committed ourselves to the keeping of the "great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ."—W. J.

VERS. 1—5.—*Heaven the place where this great High Priest ministers.* Does the writer mean, "This is the summing up," or "This is the chief point"? We accept the latter, and that we have here no recapitulation, but an advance, the point to which he has been coming from the first. Christ, High Priest; Christ, High Priest greater than Aaron. So far we have come. Subject—*Heaven the place where this great High Priest ministers.* From this comes the truth to which he has been looking from the beginning, that in heaven, as the true holy of holies, is fulfilled what was exhibited in type in the tabernacle.

I. THE ASSURANCE THAT CHRIST IS FULFILLING HIS HIGH PRIESTLY WORK IN HEAVEN. "We have a High Priest," etc. Jesus in heaven, acting as our Representative, is the crowning point of what the writer has to say about our Lord. Is not that the crowning point of all that can be said about him? Can we ever know the full blessedness of Jesus till, in our habitual thought of him, he who lived on earth, and died, and rose, is ever seen and felt to be living for us in the heavenly places? 1. *The declarations of Scripture give us this assurance.* That is intimated in the use made here of Ps. cx., the whole of ch. vii. being based on it—the Messiah was to be a Priest at God's right hand. The same word gives us the same assurance; but whereas to the Jew it was prediction, to us it is fulfilment. "He was received up into heaven," declare evangelists and apostles. 2. *The discharge of his priestly functions necessitates this.* "But [not 'now'] if he were on earth he would not be a priest at all," etc. He could not discharge his priestly duties on earth; the Law would forbid it of one not of the tribe of Levi. If, then, he is Priest, and called to what is priestly, and this cannot be on earth, it must be in heaven, for there is no other place where he could legally minister. But we Christians get the assurance that Christ in heaven is acting as High Priest, in what we find he has actually done and is ever doing. He sends his people what he promised when he should be there. Those gifts and communications come to them from heaven which they know could not come but for his mediatorial work. 3. *The fulfilment of sacred types demands this.* (Ver. 5.) A very important statement, for it occurs no less than five times in the Pentateuch—proof that the Jewish ritual was but a shadow of certain Divine realities. The ministry of the priests, therefore, must have its celestial counterpart. The high priest, after the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement, entered within the veil to present the atoning blood before the mercy-seat. That is the type; then the fulfilment must be in Christ. In the Book of Revelation the Christian sees this fulfilled in a series of visions: Christ redeeming the world, subduing his foes, completing his Church, and all this through his exaltation to the heavenly throne.

II. THE EXALTED POSITION IN HEAVEN IN WHICH THIS HIGH PRIESTLY WORK IS BEING FULFILLED. The Hebrews regarded the high priestly ministry with awe. How the majestic contrast drawn here must have arrested their attention, and surprised them by its claim: "We have such," etc. 1. *It implies our Lord's equality with the Father.* On the supreme throne only Jehovah can sit; he who sits with him as his co-equal must, with him, be one God. He who ascended is he also who descended. The Incarnation was the condescension of God himself. Get high thoughts of Jesus, for it will exalt our hope, and make our salvation more sure to our mind, and reveal fresh depths in the Divine mercy. 2. *This also implies his fearlessness in the presence of the Father.* The Jewish priest stood and trembled and adored within the veil.

Jesus sat down on the throne. Why should he fear? we might ask. Because he went there as man's Representative. The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all, he bowed his head in death under the awful burden, he then ascended into heaven, and sat down on the Father's throne. Then how certainly he had put away sin by the offering of himself! 3. *This further implies his possession of the favour of the Father.* He sat there—why? Because God said unto him, "Sit thou at my right," etc. The Father's delight must indeed be fixed on him he asks to share his throne. But it is as our Mediator he is exalted thus. Of his own right, by his own Deity, that throne was his; the invitation to ascend it was made to him as our Representative. That gives utmost encouragement to us. The welcome given to Jesus is really a welcome to all prayers for his people.

III. THE EFFECT WHICH THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST AS HIGH PRIEST SHOULD HAVE UPON OUR HEARTS. 1. *It should lead us to inquire whether we are among God's Israel.* "We"—whom does that include? The high priest entered the holiest of all for every Israelite; every Israelite could say, "He is there for me." Christ, in like manner, appears in heaven for the true [not the typical] Israel, the true seed of Abraham, they who are of faith. Faith admits into God's Israel, and for all these Christ is High Priest. Then, are we of these? 2. *It should make us feel the sufficiency of his mediation.* We can need no other priest if we have Jesus, and no other sacrifice. What can a man on earth add to that which in him we have in heaven itself! 3. *It should assure us of the supply of every necessity.* Jesus, who has the Father's ear, is at the Father's right hand; and there for us. Then we have nothing to fear.—C. N.

Vers. 6—13.—*Christ in heaven, the Mediator of the new covenant.* The argument of ch. vii. has a further object than the mere proving our Lord's superiority to Aaron. The priesthood being altered and centred in him, most important facts bearing on the spiritual position of the Hebrews grow out of it. The priesthood was the centre of the dispensation; they stood and fell together. A new priesthood means a new and better dispensation. That is the purport of ch. viii.—x. 18, where this idea is worked out by the writer in three particulars. (1) is in ch. viii. 1—5. If the priesthood is raised to heaven, then heaven is the true tabernacle and the old is abolished. (2) is that in these verses; subject—*Christ in heaven, the Mediator of the new covenant.* We have a Mediator in heaven; but for what ends does he mediate? Not those which the former priesthood had in view, for since they were appointed for them, they may be assumed to have been sufficient for them. It must, then, be for some higher end, for purposes not possible under Aaron. The writer turns, as usual, to their Scriptures, and points them to the declaration in the Book of Jeremiah, "Behold, the days come," etc. A new and better covenant was promised six hundred years before. Behold in Christ the possibility of the fulfilment of that prediction; through him exalted are to be bestowed the larger blessings promised in the latter days. Moreover, the fact of another covenant promised proves the imperfection and temporary character of what then was. At the moment of writing, the old covenant was trembling to its fall. That generation had not passed till the venerable symbols of the old covenant had disappeared from the earth like the mist of the morning.

I. GOD HAS MADE A NEW COVENANT WITH MEN. A covenant is an agreement. God has undertaken, agreed, covenanted to give certain blessings to men. He is a God in covenant with the race. A testament is a will, a promise to be fulfilled after death. It is a covenant, with the additional idea that it can only be fulfilled after the death of him who makes it. In the Gospels and Epistles (though not so in Old Testament) these two words are used interchangeably as the translation of one word. The two "testaments" are God's two covenants, which can only be fulfilled through the events of Calvary. 1. *The history of the Divine covenant.* The "new" covenant was only new in a certain sense; in reality it was the old—the original covenant on which the Jewish was temporarily grafted. God's covenant was one from beginning to end. First made in Eden, we see it gradually expanding and working out, till in the Apocalypse we have its perfect consummation in a redeemed world. The covenant with Abraham was a separate and special covenant with regard to his seed alone, and in time to be absorbed in the older covenant of world-wide aspect. 2. *What was the purpose of the Abrahamic covenant?* Owing to the corrupt state of the world, it was necessary

that a nation should be singled out, and prepared to receive the Messiah and his gospel—a nation through which the truth should spread world-wide. Hence the covenant with Israel—a covenant of Law; wonderful blessings promised on obedience. This tended to humiliation, was constantly broken and renewed, and thus carried to the heart of the people the sinfulness of sin, man's inability to deliver himself, and his need of redemption through another. When that was accomplished it was no more needed, and was abolished, and only the original covenant remained.

II. THE PERFECTION OF THE NEW COVENANT IS SEEN IN ITS CONTRAST TO THE OLD. The prophecy of Jeremiah quoted here contains three particulars of such a contrast. 1. *A conscience pacified by perfect forgiveness.* The twelfth verse begins with "for," and contains the ground of the preceding. Forgiveness first. In the Jewish economy the expiation of sin was imperfect and temporary, and quite unfit to perfect the conscience of the worshipper. The sacrifices provided a kind of legal pardon by which the nation was kept in special relation to Jehovah, but they could not put away moral guilt; "it was not possible that the blood," etc. But the new covenant made ample provision for all that was needed—a forgiveness free ("merciful"), *comprehensive* ("iniquities and sins"), *irreversible* ("remember no more"), a forgiveness that meant the annihilation of the record from the very memory of Heaven. 2. *A mind enlightened by direct communion with God.* "I will be to them," etc. The Jewish ritual made the people dependent on the priests for their knowledge of Jehovah; they might not enter the tabernacle, nor approach the symbol of the Divine presence; for the mass of Israel clouds and darkness were round about God. But through the new covenant we all have "access by one Spirit unto the Father." 3. *A heart willingly consecrated to the Divine service.* "My laws in their mind and heart." Even under Judaism some were able to say, "Oh how I love thy Law!" but it was not so with the average Jew. To him the Law was irksome and restraining. He might conform to it outwardly, but it was by the compulsion of fear, or a slavish sense of duty; his obedience did not carry his heart with it. But under the new covenant there is a new nature in harmony with the Divine will, a disposition inclining us to obedience. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

III. BY THE INTRODUCTION OF A NEW AND PERFECT COVENANT, THE OLD IS DIS-ANNULLED. "In that he saith, A new," etc. The practical lesson for to-day in this is—You are living under the new covenant; see to it that you possess its blessings. 1. *Remember the high character of these blessings covenanted to us.* Doubtful, shadowy, partial forgiveness; the intervention of the priest for personal knowledge of God; right-doing not so much from willingness as fear;—that was the old covenant. Are not many Christians rather living under this than under the new? 2. *Remember the universal possibility of these blessings.* The old covenant was restrictive, national, hereditary, and belonged to Abraham's seed only. But under the new covenant exclusiveness has vanished. God is in covenant with the race. His promises are to "every creature." The rainbow of this covenant spans the world. 3. *Remember the certain permanence of these blessings secured by the mediation of Christ.* As Aaron was the mediator of the old, Christ is of the new covenant; that is, its blessings are bestowed through him. We can only receive them from his pierced hands, and as the result of his priestly work. But he is ever presenting his pleading blood before the throne on his people's behalf, therefore they shall continue for ever. Christ's continuance is the pledge of their continuance; "an everlasting covenant, ordered in," etc.—C. N.

Vers. 1—5.—Here we have the substance of the argument, and illustrations hitherto adduced. It was the aim of the writer to show from prophecy, and the nature of the priesthood, and sacrifices of the Mosaic Law, the unrivalled and peculiar glory of Jesus Christ, and in these few verses the truths of the preceding arguments are recapitulated. It hints at the desirableness of reviewing the course of exposition, and the advantage, well known to all teachers, of the value and necessity of repeating important truths, that the things which have been uttered may not be misunderstood or forgotten. In this summary we have—

I. THE EXCLUSIVE GLORY OF CHRIST IN HIS ENTHRONEMENT. He is seated "as a Priest upon his throne," which declares a decisive contrast to the brief and anxious

standing of the high priest of old, who once a year, with anxiety and trembling, appeared in the holy of holies and performed the service of sprinkling the blood before the mercy-seat on the Day of Atonement. He prepared, as the Jews say, for this work with considerable solicitude, and returned to his own house at sunset in peace, and rejoiced that the solemn service had been legally performed. Our Lord is seated on the throne of an infinite majesty, and rejoices in the contrast between his past sorrows and his present glory. It was a blessed change for Moses to leave the tending of his flock and going after the lost and wandering sheep amid the solitudes of Sinai, and afterwards to commune with the "Father of lights," and catch the transient splendour which honoured him as a servant and betokened the Divine joy of his soul in the service of Jehovah. Our Redeemer has risen to a glory so exalted that John, when in Patmos, sank overpowered before the vision of his extraordinary resplendence. John had seen him a sufferer upon the cross; but then he saw him when all outcry against him had for ever ceased. There was no crown of thorns upon his brow, and death had been swallowed up in victory. Now he receives the due and predicted reward of his work, and is made glad with the light of his Father's countenance. All things are put under him for his body's sake, which is the Church. On his head are many crowns, and he sits in the ineffable light and glory of the eternal throne.

II. THE SUPERIOR PLACE IN WHICH HIS MINISTRY IS CARRIED ON. This is in the true tabernacle, and is, therefore, universally superior to that reared in the wilderness, which was made of wood, brass, gold, silver, goat's hair, scarlet and fine-twined linen. This sacred tent was material, and the work of men's hands. It needed an annual purification because sinful men worshipped in it, and sinful priests served at its altar. Though it was inferior to the sphere in which Christ ministers, it had a sacred meaning and typical significance, because it was made after a Divine pattern. The voice of God to Moses was, "See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount." It assumes that all merely human ideas and human additions were to be excluded from his fabric. The thoughts of God were to be expressed, and he was to be all in all. Moses was faithful to the Divine charge, and when Jehovah looked upon the tabernacle he blessed it, as he approved and blessed his own creation at the beginning. It was a shadow and outline of heavenly realities. Whether Moses was permitted to look into heaven itself, or to gaze upon some sensuous representation which impressed itself in all its details upon his exact and capacious memory, we cannot determine. There are some points of resemblance which deserve attention. In heaven there are answering realities to the types of the earthly sanctuary. In both there is the Divine presence, and God is seated on a throne of grace. In both there is honour conferred upon the Law. It was customary, observes Ewald, for Egyptian priests to place their choicest treasures in the sacred chest in the temple, and God placed his Law in the ark of the covenant. His Law is ever precious in his sight. In both there was the solemn truth of sacrifice and atonement, for on earth there was the bleeding victim, and in heaven "the Lamb as it had been slain." Worshippers approach through sacrifice; all adoration rises to God, and all blessings proceed from him through priestly service. It is the true tabernacle in which things in heaven and things in earth are reconciled through Christ. In a later part of the Epistle there is an impressive illustration of the all-encompassing extent of this spiritual building. "Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to . . . Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (ch. xii. 22—24).

III. THE DIVINE PRE-EMINENCE OF HIS SACRIFICE AND MINISTRY. He must have something to offer; but as a Priest he has the glory of offering to God every tear of penitence, every act of consecrating life to the Divine will in conversion, every prayer and thanksgiving, every noble surrender of wealth, labour, and life to the honour and service of his Father.

IV. NOTE THE COHERENCE AND HARMONY OF THESE DIVINE ARRANGEMENTS. God has exalted his dear Son and given him a Name above every name. Before him the names of patriarchs, lawgivers, captains, kings, psalmists, and prophets must yield as the stars are swallowed in the light of the morning. There is a profound suitability

and reason in his exaltation. Then follows the suitability of the sphere of his ministry. The narrow dimensions and material quality of the old tabernacle were fitted for Aaron and his descendants; but the dignity of the Redeemer requires a loftier and more spacious temple, in which he shall exercise the office of a Priest over the whole Church of the living God. The former priests offered animal sacrifices and material gifts; but he presents the spiritual oblations of his redeemed followers.—B.

Vers. 6—13.—*The reasons assigned for the introduction of the new covenant.* These consist of the suitability of the Lord Jesus to be engaged in the administration of a higher and nobler covenant than that which was established with Israel at Sinai. The more excellent ministry and the more excellent covenant go together. There were promises attached to the observance of the Mosaic which related to temporal blessings, such as harvests, vintages, and the peace and quiet of the land. The better covenant is founded upon better promises, and requires a mediator whose character corresponds to the higher institution of Divine grace. The next reason is the *unsatisfactory result* of the former covenant. It was good in itself, and was, as everything which cometh from the Father of lights, suitable as a preparatory institution, while the Church was under tutors and governors. Under this dispensation there was frequent idolatry, desecration of the temple, injustice, and prevalent corruption. Jeremiah lived to see the carrying away to Babylon, which proved the Divine displeasure against people whose history began with a sublime act of redemption from the bondage and miseries of Egypt; which act should have been an abiding cause of grateful and persevering obedience to him who by signs and wonders had released them from subjection to a cruel power, and exalted them to the dignity of a nation which “was born in a day.” While Jeremiah saw the sin and punishment of his people, he found in the promise of a new and better covenant the consolation which sustained his soul, and provided encouragement for many others. The new covenant contains four blessings of the highest value.

I. THE INSCRIPTION OF THE LAW OF GOD IN THE HEART. It is a remark of Ewald’s that in Egyptian temples there were arks, or sacred chests, into which the priests put everything they deemed of the highest value. Jehovah had nothing more precious than his Law, which, being the expression of his righteous will, and for the good of Israel, was placed in the ark of the covenant. While the Law was in the sacred place the people forgot its claims, worshipped false gods, and were guilty of many transgressions. The new covenant places the Law in the heart, and thus life becomes a scene of obedience, a cause of sincerity in worship, and by its constant presence preserves believers from offending God, and produces the fruits of righteousness. Paul said, “With the mind I serve the Law of God; and the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”

II. The next privilege it secures is THE SACRED RELATION WHICH SUBSISTS BETWEEN GOD AND HIS COVENANTED PEOPLE. This suggests the thought of king and subjects. He, as the King, is the glory of the true Israel. He can defend them from assault, can supply all their needs “according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” The various images of his connection with his people are all summed up in this term, in which he undertakes to be the God of his redeemed ones. If the ancient subjects of Jehovah could say, “The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King; he will save us,” much more joyfully may Christians exult in him who is their covenant God. Those who enter into covenant become his people by spiritual civilization, and differ from the barbarous, unorganized tribes of the earth. As his subjects, they reveal the character of the government under which they live, serve the high purposes of God, and are a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Their citizenship is in heaven, and they belong to the kingdom of God.

III. There is THE ENJOYMENT OF ESSENTIAL AND SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE. It cannot be supposed that the followers of Christ will ever be raised above the need of ministerial help and instruction in the things of God, since the first great gift bestowed upon the Church included apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers. It is therefore presumable that this suggests the fact that all who belong to the New Testament Church will not require remonstrance and persuasion to acknowledge the fundamental truths of true religion. During the Law, there were many occasions on which righteous men had

to say to their countrymen, "Know the Lord." It appears from a passage in the Epistle to the Galatians (iv. 8) to mark the transition from idolatry to the worship of the true God. "Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service to them which by nature are no gods." There may be a designed allusion to the people in the desert, where, in addition to the tabernacle, there was the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of the god Remphan. The new covenant secures the loyal adhesion of every believer to this fundamental truth, upon which, by prayer, reading, and attendance upon an enlightened ministry, the soul is nourished to larger strength, brighter knowledge, and loftier degrees of holiness.

IV. There is THE ENJOYMENT OF FORGIVENESS. It was not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin. The blood of the new covenant, shed for many for the remission of sins, cleanses from all stains, and produces Divine peace. Looking at forgiveness in the light of the Word of God, it is an invaluable blessing. It releases us from evil thoughts, and excuses which appeared in the words of Adam and Eve, and makes the spirit to be "without guile." It disarms the power of temptation. It introduces those who are forgiven into the safe and joyful state of justification, with all the blessings which are inseparably connected therewith. It engages the presence and gracious action of the Spirit of God, who enriches the soul with fruits of righteousness, and creates, by his presence and power, an earnest of the life to come. The two covenants cannot stand together to distract the attention of mankind, and create uncertainty about the method of salvation. As the Jews did not pass over into the blessedness of the new covenant, God removed the temple, the altar, and the priesthood by an act of righteous judgment, which began at "the house of God;" and in the occupation of Jerusalem by an alien power, and the suspension of sacrifices for eighteen centuries, he has told the world that the old covenant is vanished away.—B.

Ver. 1.—*The Minister of the true tabernacle, his position and his office.* I. HIS POSITION. 1. *It is in the heavens.* He has passed through the veil into the heavens. He is no longer a localized priest, near to some and far away from others, but is in heaven, which is near to all of us. This bringing of heaven in contact with every human being is set forth by the teaching of the natural world. No one man has come in contact with more than a very tiny piece, comparatively, of the world in which he lives; but once in twenty-four hours every man in the world sees the sun, which is the great visible representative of heavenly resource and blessing. 2. *In the most glorious position a mediator can occupy.* He is at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. This throne is the heavenly counterpart to the ark of the covenant in the earthly tabernacle. 3. *In this position the High Priest Jesus is seated.* Seated, for he is there permanently. Incessant are the needs of that human race for whom he acts. Seated also to indicate sonship, heirship, and Divine dignity.

II. HIS OFFICE. The high priest is a liturgical minister. He does holy offices in connection with a holy structure, on behalf of the people. The word "true" here is doubtless to be taken in connection with the holy things as well as with the tabernacle itself. Jesus is Minister of the true holy things in the true tabernacle. This word "true" is a most comprehensive one, as showing the inward compared with the outward, the essence compared with the form, the abiding compared with the changing, type as compared with antitype, ends that are spiritual and invisible, as compared with means that are material and visible. Notice the frequency of this word *ἀληθινός* in the New Testament. We read of the true riches, the true light, the true worshippers, the true bread, the true vine, the true God, the true witness. The priesthood of Jesus is a new and perfect thing, and indicates a new and perfect system. If a number of types are related together, then the bringing in of the antitype to one of them means the bringing in of all the other antitypes. God has a glorious place of abode in the invisible world, a true holy of holies, where Jesus has gone, where Jesus remains; and to that holy of holies all true worshippers shall, in due time, be gathered.—Y.

Ver. 3.—*The high priest—for what appointed.* I. THE STATEMENT AS TO HIGH PRIESTLY FUNCTION IN GENERAL. All high priests, whether they be Aaronic priests or Jesus himself, are appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices. Thus the classification is made of offerings for God. There are *gifts*, the expressions of thankfulness and devotion,

which may be offered, which ought to be offered, but which can only have value as they come spontaneously and of free-will. To give them only in response to a Divine commandment would be to alter their character altogether. Their very name indicates this, as being not simply things given, but *δῶρα*, things given freely. Then there are also *sacrifices*, the purpose of which is more particularly defined in ver. 1, where they are mentioned as sacrifices for sin. And all this volume of gratitude and penitence, instead of being scattered about in individual manifestations, left to each one's own time and place and manner, was reduced to order, and made a national proceeding. As to gifts, a man was free to settle in his own mind whether he would give or not; but if he gave, he must give in a particular way.

II. THE SPECIAL APPLICATION TO JESUS. How can he now discharge a priestly office in respect of gifts and sacrifices? With respect to sacrifices the answer is given plainly, not only in this Epistle, but in all apostolic teaching. A reference to ch. ix. 14 may be enough to illustrate this. Jesus, the true High Priest, offered up himself as the true Sacrifice. But what about the gifts? These, be it remembered, we still have to provide. A sacrifice for sin we cannot provide, but it is provided for us. Gifts, however, we are bound to bestow—gifts, more in quantity than ever, and better in quality, seeing that our obligations are added to by Christ's provision of a sacrifice for sins. And we lay these gifts on God's altar when most of all we serve the needy. As it is true that he who gives to the poor lends to the Lord, so he who gives to the needy because of their need, hoping for nothing again, makes an offering to the Lord. It is by the Spirit of Jesus Christ that we are led into that sort of gratitude which is acceptable to God. The gifts which are most acceptable for God to receive are those which indicate our appreciation of his spiritual mercies. It is a poor business if we have not received more from God than the things which he bestows equally on the good and the evil, the just and the unjust. Our best gifts are those which promote the cause of Christ, which are offered with a distinct intention towards the progress of that cause.—Y.

Ver. 6.—*A verse of comparisons.* A more excellent ministry—a better covenant—better promises. How all this illustrates the way of God! Whatever he appoints and plans is good, and good just because it is exactly proportioned to good ends. But these ends have to be measured by the power of men to fall in with them. Man, with his limited prospect, reckons to be an end what God reckons as only the means to a greater end. God made to Israel promises of a land of inheritance on earth, just that they might thereby be prepared in time to see that there was something much better. Higher demands were made, a completer obedience was possible, and the conditions existed for fulfilling richer promises. And of this new state of things Jesus, as the Mediator, is the central Figure; it is his presence and his power that make the new state of things possible. The better covenant is only better because it can become a reality, and Jesus it is who makes the reality. The old covenant, as we clearly see, was a broken covenant. God brought his people into the land of promise; but, after all, this could not be called the keeping of his promise. His promise was made upon conditions to be supplied by the people to whom the promise was made. They did not supply these conditions, consequently the promise could not be fulfilled. And now, instead of Moses, the mere proclaimer of law, there comes Jesus to complete law, to expand promises into their spiritual fulness, and, at the same time, act as a Mediator in really receiving these promises for men. If God's laws are to be written upon our hearts, it can only be by the work of Jesus. If we are to be persuaded into a living interest in God's promises, and to care for the things he wants us to care for, it must be by the work of Jesus. He only can inspire us individually with an inclination to set our names to the new covenant. He only can show us the inward realities of which outward shows are but the parabolic expression. Real mediation, how rich it is in results! It is not like the wire along which electricity travels, a mere medium of communication. It is a medium of life and growth. Jesus Christ is the real Mediator in living, abiding, unbreakable, necessary communion with God, and in the same sort of communion with man. The old covenant did nothing more than reveal man's utter deplorable weakness in himself. The new covenant reveals man's strength in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ can make all things new; he can make the good better; he can

bring living realities instead of living, tantalizing forms; he can make man stand erect in the strength of his renewed nature, disposed to enter into covenant with God, and able to keep the terms of the covenant he has made.—Y.

Ver. 13.—*The advent of the new and the doom of the old.* I. WE MUST LOOK AT THE CHARACTER OF THE NEW. Mere novelty by itself counts for nothing. Man's new things are too often brought in, not because they are needed, but from mere restlessness, love of change, and self-glorification. The right principle of change is necessity, superseding the old because it has done its work. That is the principle, we may be sure, on which God acts. Thus we must not too readily assume that the introduction of the new is the doom of the old; that is, using the word "old" in the sense of long-established. New philosophies, new schemes of the universe, rise up threatening the long-established gospel; but in time the philosophies become old, unsatisfying, and vanish away, while the gospel remains, still welcome, still powerful.

II. GOD'S WISDOM IN DOING THINGS AT THE RIGHT TIME. God's new things always come in at the fulness of time. The first covenant had done its work, but those who upheld the forms of it were the last to see this. Nay, more; just in proportion as the inward reality vanished did they cling with tenacity to the outward form. If it had depended on the rulers of Jerusalem to say when the new covenant was needed, it would have been a long time in coming. Man by himself cannot be trusted to say when the season of decrepitude for any institution has come. God takes the laws of necessary change into his own hands, and makes it evident to those who have eyes to see that his new things have not come without necessity. The new state of things needs to be experienced as a reality, and then it approves itself as an improvement on the old; it becomes plain that the old was not an end in itself, but only a stage toward the attainment of the new. Whatsoever new thing is true and manifestly servicable must make its way; and it is well for its own sake that the way should be made through difficulties and discouragements. They are wise who can see in time the difference between a mere novelty and a novelty that has conquest and resistless growth in it. The bringing in of the new wine-skins is the doom of the old ones.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IX.

The sphere of Christ's "more excellent ministry," as the "Mediator of a better covenant," having been shown to be elsewhere than in the earthly tabernacle, the ministry itself is now contrasted with that of the superseded priesthood. With this view the latter is described, and shown to express in itself its own insufficiency and to point to a more availing one to come.

Ver. 1.—Then verily (or, now indeed) the first covenant also (or, even the first covenant) had ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary (rather *its sanctuary of this world* (*τὸ τῆς αἰῶνος κοινῆς*). The definite article points to the well-known one of the Mosaic dispensation, which, unlike the true one, was in its bearings, as well as locally and materially, of this world only). This sanctuary itself is now first described in necessary preparation for an account of priestly ministrations in it.

Vers. 2—5.—For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick,

and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the holy place. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the holy of holies; having a golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid with gold, wherein was a golden pot having the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and over it the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat; of which things we cannot now speak particularly. The tabernacle as a whole is first spoken of; and then its two divisions, called respectively "the first" and "the second" tabernacle. The account of them is from the Pentateuch, and describes them as they originally were. In the then existing temple there were neither ark, mercy-seat, nor cherubim, though the ceremonies were continued as though they had been still there. The ark had been removed or destroyed in the sack by the Chaldeans, and was never replaced (for the Jewish tradition on the subject, see 2 Macc. ii. 1—8). Josephus says ('Bell. Jud.,' v. 5. 5) that in the temple of his day there was nothing whatever behind the veil in the holy of holies; and Tacitus informs us ('Hist.,' v. 9) that, when

Pompey entered the temple, he found there "vacuam sedem et inania arcana." A stone basement is said by the rabbis to have occupied the ark's place, called "lapis fundationis." In the "first tabernacle," called "the holy place" (*ἅγια* probably, not *ἅγια*: i.e. a neuter plural, equivalent to "the holies"), the table of shewbread (with its twelve loaves in two rows, changed weekly) stood on the north side, i.e. the right as one approached the veil; and opposite to it, on the left, the seven-branched golden candlestick, or lamp-stand, carrying an oil-lamp on each branch (Exod. xxv., xxxvii., xl.). Between them, close to the veil stood the golden altar of incense (*ibid.*); which, nevertheless, is not mentioned here as part of the furniture of the "first tabernacle," being associated with the "second," for reasons which will be seen. The "second veil" was that between the holy place and the holy of holies (Exod. xxxvi. 35), the curtain at the entrance of the holy place (Exod. xxxvi. 37) being regarded as the first. The inner sanctuary behind this second veil is spoken of as *having* (*ἔχουσα*) in the first place "a golden censer," as the word *θυμιατήριον* is translated in the A.V. (so also in the Vulgate, *thuribulum*). But it assuredly means the "golden altar of incense," though this stood locally outside the veil. For (1) otherwise there would be no mention at all of this altar, which was so important in the symbolism of the tabernacle, and so prominent in the Pentateuch, from which the whole description is taken. (2) The alternative view of its being a censer reserved for the use of the high priest, when he entered behind the veil on the Day of Atonement, has no support from the Pentateuch, in which no such censer is mentioned as part of the standing furniture of the tabernacle, and none of *gold* is spoken of at all; nor, had it been so, would it have been placed, any more than the altar of incense, *within* the veil, since the high priest required it *before* he entered. (3) Though the word itself, *θυμιατήριον*, certainly means "censer," and not "altar of incense," in the LXX., yet in the Hellenistic writers it is otherwise. Philo and Josephus, and also Clemens Alexandrinus and Origen, always call the altar of incense *θυμιατήριον χρυσεόν*; and the language of the Epistle is Hellenistic. (4) The wording does not of necessity imply that what is spoken of was locally *within* the veil: it is not said (as where the actual contents of the "first tabernacle" and of the ark are spoken of) *wherein* (*ἐν ᾧ*), but *having* (*ἔχουσα*), which need only mean *having as belonging to it*, as connected with its symbolism. It was an appendage to the holy of holies, though not actually inside it, in the same way (to use a homely illustration given

by Delitzsch) as the sign-board of a shop belongs to the shop and not to the street. It is, indeed, so regarded in the Old Testament. See Exod. xl. 5, "Thou shalt set the altar of gold for the incense before the ark of the testimony;" also Exod. xxx. 6, "Before the mercy-seat that is over the testimony;" and 1 Kings vi. 22, "The altar which was by the oracle," or, "*belonging to the oracle*;" cf. also Isa. vi. 6 and Rev. viii. 3, where, in the visions of the heavenly temple based upon the symbolism of the earthly, the altar of incense is associated with the Divine throne. And it was also so associated in the ceremonial of the tabernacle. The smoke of the incense daily offered on it was supposed to penetrate the veil to the holy of holies, representing the sweet savour of intercession before the mercy-seat itself; and on the Day of Atonement, not only was its incense taken by the high priest within the veil, but also it, as well as the mercy-seat, was sprinkled with the atoning blood. Of the rest of the things described as belonging to the holy of holies, it is to be observed that, though none of them were in it when the Epistle was written, yet all (except the pot of manna and Aaron's rod) were essential to its significance, as will be seen; and all, with these two exceptions, were in Solomon's temple as well as in the original tabernacle. An objection that has been raised to the accuracy of the description, on the ground that the pot and the rod are not said in the Pentateuch to have been placed *inside* the ark, is groundless. They were to be laid up "before the Lord" (Exod. xvi. 33); "before the testimony" (Numb. xvii. 10); and "the testimony" elsewhere means the tables of the Law (Exod. xxv. 16; xxxi. 18; xl. 20, etc.), which were within the ark. It was most likely that they would be kept for safe preservation in the same place with the "testimony," *before* which they were ever to be. Further, what is said (1 Kings viii. 9 and 2 Chron. v. 10) of there being nothing in the ark but the two tables of stone when it was moved into Solomon's temple, is no proof that nothing else had been originally there. It seems, indeed, rather to favour the idea that there had been, as implying that something more might have been expected to be found there. The mercy-seat, as is well known, was the cover of the ark, over which the wings of the two cherubim were spread. The expression, "cherubim of glory," probably has reference to the luminous cloud, significant of the Divine presence, which, occasionally at least (there is no sufficient ground for concluding it to have been a permanent manifestation), is said to have been seen above them. The cherubim, whatever their exact significance, are represented as

accompaniments of the Divine glory (cf. Isa. vi. and Ezek. i. and x.).

Ver. 6.—Now these things being thus ordained (A.V.; rather, *arranged* or *constituted*; it is the same word (*κατασκευάω*) as was used in ver. 2, “there was a tabernacle made;” also in ch. iii. 8, 4, of God’s “house;” on which see *supra*), the priests go in continually into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the services. (Observe that here, where the ministrations are described, present tenses are used; perhaps because these ministrations were still going on when the Epistle was written.) The continual services in the “first tabernacle” were (1) lighting the lamps every evening, and trimming them every morning (Exod. xxvii. 21; xxx. 8; Lev. xxiv. 8); (2) renewing the twelve loaves of shewbread every sabbath (Lev. xxiv. 5, etc.); (3) burning incense on the golden altar twice daily, when the lamps were trimmed and lighted (Exod. xxx. 7, 8), at the time of the morning and evening sacrifice, the people meanwhile praying outside (Luke i. 10).

Vers. 7, 8.—But into the second the high priest alone, once in the year, not without blood, which he offereth for himself and for the errors (literally, *ignorances*; cf. ver. 2) of the people. For the ceremonies on the Day of Atonement, see Lev. xvi. They may be summarized, in their main characteristics, thus: (1) The high priest brought to the door of the tabernacle a bullock as a sin offering for himself, and two goats as a sin offering for the people; also a ram as a burnt offering for himself, and a ram as a burnt offering for the people. (2) After washing and arraying himself in white linen garments (not the ordinary official dress), he cast lots on the two goats which were for the people’s sin offering—one lot being “for the Lord,” the other “for Azazel;” that on which the former lot fell being for sacrifice, the other to be set free. (3) He sacrificed his own sin offering, entered the holy place with the blood thereof, filled a censer with burning coals from the golden altar, went with it within the veil, sprinkling incense on the coals, “that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy-seat, that he die not;” took also the blood within the veil, and sprinkled the mercy-seat therewith. (4) He returned outside the tabernacle, sacrificed the people’s sin offering, i.e. the goat that was “for the Lord,” entered the holy place with its blood, and proceeded as before; sprinkling also the altar of incense, as well as the mercy-seat, with the blood of both sacrifices, to “hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.” (5) He again returned outside the tabernacle, laid his hands on the head of the goat “for Azazel,” confessing

over him “all the iniquities of the children of Israel, putting them on the head of the goat,” and sent him away to the wilderness, where he was to be let go. (6) He again entered the tabernacle, where he put off his linen garments, and left them there, and then, after washing again, and putting on his ordinary official dress, sacrificed his own and the people’s burnt offering. (7) The bodies of the two sin offerings (the bullock and the slain goat) were taken outside the camp, and there entirely consumed by fire. The points in this ceremonial here especially noted are: (1) That the entrance within the veil was only “once in the year,” i.e. on one only day in the year; for on that day the high priest entered more than once. The meaning is that ordinarily, except on that single day, approach to the innermost shrine was closed to all. (2) That even on that day the high priest *alone* entered; neither the people, nor even the priesthood generally, ever had approach to the holiest of all. (3) That even he could not enter “without blood;” neither the daily sacrifices nor all the ordinary ceremonial of the Law availed for his access: he must take with him the blood of special sin offerings, or he still could not enter and live. (4) This blood he offered “for himself and for the *ignorances* of the people;” for *himself*, since he too was “compassed with infirmity,” and required atonement (ver. 2), and also for the people’s *ignorances*. There is a significance in this word. It was not the sins done with a high hand that had to be atoned for on that day; these were either visited by “cutting off,” or atoned for in ways appointed for the purpose: it was the less definite and undetected sinfulness, infecting the whole community, and remaining after all ceremonial cleansing, so as to debar them from coming “boldly to the throne of grace,” that was yearly kept in remembrance on the Day of Atonement. Hence before even the high priest could enter and not die, the mercy-seat over “the testimony” which was within the ark must be enveloped with the cloud of incense and sprinkled with the blood which “covereth sin” (the verb translated “make atonement for” means properly “cover”). The sin was still not taken away, only “covered” for the time; for the holy of holies after the ceremony remained closed as before, and the same rites had to be repeated at each yearly entrance. All that was expressed was an ever-recurring need of atonement, not yet effected truly, though symbolically prefigured. The Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all (so the A.V., giving the idea correctly, though the expression is simply *τὴν ἁγίαν*, which *might* denote only the holy place, as in ver. 2, if we there read *ἁγία* and not *ἁγία*,

but is used for the holy of holies in vers. 24, 25, and for its heavenly antitype in ver. 13. This last, as typified in the earthly sanctuary, is what is intended here) hath not yet been made manifest, while as the first tabernacle is yet standing (or rather, *has standing* (*ἔχουσας σκάνω*); has a place in the symbolical representation). The "first tabernacle" here spoken of certainly does not mean the earthly one as opposed to the heavenly, but what the expression denotes throughout the chapter, the holy place in distinction from the holy of holies. How, then, is the continued existence of this a sign that the way to the heavenly holy of holies has not yet been made manifest? Obviously because it intervenes between the congregation and the holy of holies of the earthly tabernacle, debarring all approach to the latter, and even hiding it from their view. This debarring intervention signifies that there is no approach for them as yet to what the holy of holies symbolizes. Further, the ordinary ministry of the priests themselves did not extend beyond this "first tabernacle;" this alone was the sphere of the services which they accomplished daily; and so the very fact of its existing for this purpose expressed that even their mediation was not availing for access to the inner mercy-seat. And that this was so is intimated with peculiar significance by the direction that, when the high priest alone entered within the veil, none even of them should be in the holy place at all, so as to see beyond it: "And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place" (Lev. xvi. 17).

Ver. 9.—Which (*ἥτις*, with its usual force) is a parable for the time present (i.e. present as regarded from the standpoint of the old dispensation. The A.V., translating "then present," and using past tenses throughout, though departing from literalism, still gives, we conceive, the idea correctly); according to which (referring to "parable," if we adopt the best-supported reading, *καθ' ἣν*. The Textus Receptus, followed by the A.V., has *καθ' ὅν*, referring to "the time") are offered both gifts and sacrifices (cf. ver. 1), which cannot, as pertaining to the conscience, make him that doth the service (or, "the worshipper," the idea not being confined to the officiating priest; cf. ch. x. 2, where *τοὺς λατρεύοντας* is translated "the worshippers") perfect. The emphatic expression here is *κατὰ συνείδησιν*. The gifts and sacrifices of the Law availed in themselves only for external ceremonial purification; they did not reach, however typical, the sphere of man's inner consciousness; they could not bring about that sense of spiritual accord with God which is spoken of in Jer. xxxi.

as marking the new covenant (see below, vers. 13, 14).

Ver. 10.—Rendered in A.V., "Which stood only in (*μόνον ἐν*) meats and drinks and divers washings, and carnal ordinances [*καὶ δικαύμασι σαρκός*, Textus Receptus], imposed on them (*ἐπιτελούμενα*) until the time of reformation." This is a satisfactory rendering of the Textus Receptus, *ἐν* before "meats," etc., being taken in the sense of *dependence*, and *τελούμενα* necessarily as agreeing with "gifts and sacrifices" (*δῶδ τε καὶ θυσίας*) in ver. 9. But there are other readings, though none, any more than that of the Textus Receptus, to be decidedly preferred on the mere ground of manuscript authority. The best sense seems to be given by that of *δικαύματα* instead of *καὶ δικαύμασι*, so that we may render (*ἐν* being taken in the sense of *addition*). Being only (with meats and drinks and divers washings) carnal ordinances, imposed until the time of reformation. We thus have an obvious neuter plural (*δικαύματα*) for *ἐπιτελούμενα* to agree with, and we avoid the assertion that the "gifts and sacrifices" of the Law "stood only" in "meats," etc. This was not so; their essential part was blood-shedding (*αἱματεχύσις*, ver. 22); the other things here mentioned were but accompaniments and appendages. The "meats and drinks" spoken of may refer mainly to the distinctions between clean and unclean viands, which we know were made such a point of by the Jews of the apostolic age (cf. Col. ii. 16—23; Rom. xiv.; 1 Cor. viii.; also Mark vii. 15). The "divers washings" (*βαπτισμοί*) may be taken to include both the ablutions of the priests before sacrifice, and those enjoined on the people in many parts of the Law after ceremonial defilement, which kind of washings had been further multiplied variously in the traditional law (cf. Mark vii. 3, 4, 8).

Vers. 11, 12.—But Christ having come (*παρουγενόμενος*, cf. Matt. iii. 1; Luke xii. 51) a High Priest (or, as *High Priest*) of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation (*κτίσεως*), nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, entered in once for all (*ἐφ' ἑαυτῆς*) into the holy place, having obtained (*εὐρέμενος*, not necessarily antecedent to *εἰσέλθων*) eternal redemption. On the futurity expressed (here and ch. x. 1) by "the good things to come" (the reading *μελλόντων* being preferred to *γενομένων*), see under ch. i. 1 (*ἐν ἡμέραις τούτων*) and ch. ii. 5 (*τὴν οἰκουμένην τὴν μέλλουσαν*). Here, certainly, the period of the earthly tabernacle having been the temporal standpoint in all the preceding verses, futurity with regard to it may,

without difficulty, be understood; and hence "the good things" may still be regarded as such as have already come in Christ. On the other hand, there is no difficulty in regarding them as still future. For the full and final result of even Christ's perfected high priesthood is not yet come. But what is "the greater and more perfect tabernacle," through which he entered the heavenly holy of holies? It seems evidently, in the first place, to be connected with *εἰσόδου*, being regarded as the antitype of that "first tabernacle" through which the high priests on earth had passed in order to enter within the veil; *εἰς* having here a local, not an instrumental, sense. The instrumental sense of the same preposition in the next clause (*διὰ τοῦ ἁίματος αἵματος*) is not against this view. In English, "through his own blood he entered through the tabernacle" presents no difficulty, though "through" is used in two different senses. But what is exactly meant by the tabernacle through which Christ has passed? Bearing in mind what was said under ch. viii. 2 of the prophetic visions of a heavenly temple—corresponding to the earthly one—and that the epithet *ἀρχιερεὺς* is applied also (ver. 24) by implication to the counterpart of the holy of holies, and also the expression (ch. iv. 14), "having passed through the heavens (*διεληλυθὲς τοὺς οὐρανοὺς*)," we may regard it as denoting the heavenly region beyond this visible sphere of things (*οὐρανὸς τῆς κτίσεως*), intervening between the latter and the immediate presence, or "face," of God. Thus "through the greater and more perfect tabernacle" of this verse answers to "having passed through the heavens" of ch. iv. 14; and "entered once for all into the holy place" of ver. 12 to "entered into heaven itself" (the very heaven) of ver. 24. Thus also the symbolical acts of the Day of Atonement are successively, and in due order, fulfilled. As the high priest first sacrificed the sin offering *outside* the tabernacle, and then passed through the holy to the holy of holies, so Christ first offered himself in this mundane sphere of things, and then passed through the heavens to the heaven of heavens. Delitzsch, taking this view, offers a still more definite explanation; thus: "The former (*τὰ ἅγια*) is that eternal heaven of God himself (*πῶς δὲ οὐρανός*) which is his own self-manifested eternal glory (John xvii. 5), and existed before all worlds; the latter (*ἡ σκηνή*) is the heaven of the blessed, in which he shines upon his creatures in 'the light of love'—the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven" of Rev. xv. 5, which the apocalyptic seer beheld filled with incense-smoke from 'the glory of God, and from his power.'" There are

other views of what is meant by "the greater and more perfect tabernacle." The most notable, as being that of Chrysostom and the Fathers generally, is that it means Christ's human nature, which he assumed before passing to the throne of the Majesty on high. This view is suggested by his having himself spoken of the *temple* of his body (John ii. 21), and calling it, if the "false witnesses" at his trial reported him truly, *χειροποιητόν* (Mark xiv. 58); by the expression (John i. 14), "The Word was made flesh, and tabernacled (*ἐσκήνωσεν*) among us;" by St. Paul's speaking of the human body as a *tabernacle* (2 Cor. v. 1, 4); and by ch. x. 19, 20, where the "veil" through which we have "a new and living way into the holy place through the blood of Jesus" is said to be his *flesh*. There is thus abundant ground for thinking of Christ's body as signified by a tabernacle; and the expression in ch. x. 19, 20 goes some way to countenance such an interpretation here. The objection to it is that it seems neither suggested by the context nor conformable to the type of the high priest on the Day of Atonement. For, if the human body of Christ assumed at his birth is meant, he entered into that before, not after, his atoning sacrifice; and if, with Hofmann, we think rather of his glorified body, in what sense in accordance with the type can it be said that he entered *through* it? We should rather say that he ascended *with* it to the right hand of God. The further points of contrast between Christ's entrance and that of the earthly high priests are: (1) The instrumental medium was not the blood of goats and calves (specified here as having been the sin offerings on the Day of Atonement), but *his own* blood; he was both Priest and Victim. (2) He entered, not yearly, but *once for all*; there was no need of continual repetition. And the conclusion is drawn that the redemption he thus wrought is consequently *complete* and *eternal*. The first of these contrasts is enlarged on from ver. 13 to ver. 24; the second (denoted by *ἐφάπαξ*) is taken up at ver. 25. On the word "redemption" (*λύτρωσις*: in some other passages *ἀπολύτρωσις*) it is to be observed that it means, according to its etymology, release obtained by payment of a *ransom* (*λύτρον*), and thus in itself involves the doctrine of *atonement* according to the orthodox view. It is true that in many Scripture passages it is used (as also *λυτροῦσθαι* and *λυτρωτής*) in a more general sense to express deliverance only, but never where the redemption of mankind by Christ is spoken of. In such cases the *λύτρον* is often distinctly specified, as in Matt. xx. 28 and Mark x. 45, "his life;" in 1 Tim. ii. 6 and Titus ii. 14, "himself;" in Eph. i. 7;

Col. i. 14; 1 Pet. i. 19, "his blood;" of also *infra*, ver. 14. As to how the availing power of the atonement is to be understood, more will be said under the verses that follow.

Ver. 13.—For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling those that have been defiled (*καταρτυμένοι*, of Matt. xv. 11, etc.; Acts xxi. 28), sanctifieth to the purifying (literally, *unto the purity, καθαρότητα*) of the flesh. In addition to the sin offerings of the Day of Atonement, mention is here made of the red heifer, whose ashes were to be mixed with water for the purification of such as had been ceremonially defiled by contact with dead bodies (for account of which see Numb. xix.). They are classed together because both were general sin offerings for the whole congregation, representing the idea of continual and unavoidable defilement notwithstanding all the daily sacrifices; the difference between them being that the ashes were reserved for use in known cases of constantly recurring defilement, the sin offerings on the Day of Atonement were for general sin and defilement, known or unknown. But neither, in themselves, could from their very nature avail for more than outward ceremonial cleansing—"the purity of the flesh." This, however, they did avail for; and, if so, what must the cleansing power of *Christ's* offering be? Its deeper efficacy shall appear from consideration of what it was.

Ver. 14.—How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purify your (al. *our*) conscience from dead works to serve the living God! As in vers. 11, 12 Christ's entrance was contrasted with that of the high priest, so here is the sacrifice itself, in virtue of which he entered, similarly contrasted. The points of contrast to which attention is drawn are these: (1) It was the blood, not of beasts that perish, but of Christ himself—the Christ, the Hope of Israel, whose Divine prerogatives have been set forth in the preceding chapters. (2) He offered *himself*. His offering was a voluntary self-oblation, not the blood-shedding of passive victims. (3) His offering was really "spotless" (*ἁμωμος*) in the sense of *sinless*—the only sense that can satisfy Divine justice—symbolized only by the absence of material blemish in the ancient sacrifices. (4) And this he did "through the eternal Spirit." This expression, which comes first in order, has an important bearing on the meaning of the whole passage, and calls for especial consideration. Be it observed, first, that the words are "the eternal Spirit," not "the Holy Spirit." It is not the usual designation of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. (The reading *ἅγιον* for *αἰώνιον* has

not much authority in its favour, and is, besides, much more likely to have been substituted than the other.) What, then, is meant by "the eternal Spirit," through which Christ offered himself spotless? There are three notable texts in which the *Spirit* in Christ is opposed to the *flesh*: Rom. i. 8, Τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαβὶδ κατὰ σάρκα τοῦ ὁρισθέντος υἱοῦ Θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει, κατὰ Πνεῦμα ἁγιασμένης, ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν: 1 Tim. iii. 16, Ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί, ἐδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι: 1 Pet. iii. 18, Θανατωθεὶς μὲν σαρκί, ζῶντος τοῦ πνεύματος. In all these passages the *Spirit* is that Divine element of life in Christ, distinct from the human nature which he assumed of the seed of David, in virtue of which he rose from the dead. In us men, too, according to St. Paul, there is the *πνεῦμα*, as well as *σὰρξ* and *ψυχὴ* (sometimes *πνεῦμα* and *σὰρξ* alone are spoken of)—the higher principle of life within us, in virtue of which we can have communion with God and be influenced by his Holy Spirit. Any act of acceptable self-oblation that we might be capable of would be done through the *spirit* that is in us, to which the *flesh* is subdued. Corresponding to this in Christ was "the eternal Spirit"—a truly Divine spiritual Personality, conjoined with his assumed humanity. Through this he overcame death, it being impossible that he should be holden of it; through this, too, he offered himself a willing sacrifice, submitting to the full penalty of human sin in obedience to the Father's will. Thus is prominently brought to view the *spiritual* aspect of the atonement. Its especial virtue is said to lie, not in the mere suffering or the mere physical blood-shedding and death upon the cross, but in its being a voluntary act of perfect obedience on the part of him who was the Representative of man, and in whom "the eternal Spirit" triumphed over the weakness of humanity. The agony in the garden (see under ver. 7, etc.) is illustrative of this view of the virtue of the atonement. There we perceive "the eternal Spirit" in the Saviour completely victorious over natural human shrinking. The same view appears in the reference to Ps. xl. in ch. x., where "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God" expresses the essential principle of the availing sacrifice (see below on ch. x. 5, etc.). Hence follows what is said next of the *effect* of such a sacrifice as this was—to purify, not the *flesh*, but the *conscience* (*συείλην*), meaning "man's inner consciousness" with regard to God and our relations to him. It belonged essentially to the spiritual sphere of things, and in that sphere (as was not the case with the old sacrifices) must be, and is felt to be, its availing power. It was, in fact, just such a sacrifice as man's conscience, if enlightened, feels to be due to

God. Man, as he is now, cannot make it; but in the "Son of man" he sees it made, and thus finds at last the idea of a true atonement fulfilled. In the expression, "dead works," there may be an intended allusion to the dead bodies from the pollution of which especially the "ashes of an heifer" purified; and in "to serve" (*eis τὸ λατρεύειν*) there is an evident reference to the legal type. As the legal sin offering purified the flesh from the contamination of contact with the dead, so that the Israelites, thus cleansed, might offer acceptable worship, so Christ's offering of himself fulfils what was thus typified; it purifies the "conscience" from the contamination of "dead works," so that we may offer our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our *λογικὴ λατρεία* (Rom. xii. 1). On *νεκρῶν ἔργων*, see under ch. vi. 1. Here, the idea of general pollution pervading the whole congregation having been prominent in what precedes, we may, perhaps, take the expression as denoting all human works whatever "done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of 'his Spirit,'" all being regarded as tainted with sin, and so *dead* for the purpose of justification. The purification from them which is spoken of involves (be it further observed) both justification through atonement and sanctification through grace: the first, since, otherwise, the very meaning of the old sin offerings would not be fulfilled; the second, as denoted by the concluding clause, "to serve," etc. The second is the necessary sequence of the first. Believers are not only "cleansed from their former sins," but also put into a position for offering an acceptable service. In the *life* of Christ in whom they live, and who ever *liveth* to make intercession for them, they can henceforth "serve the living God." There is involved, in fact (to return to the account of the new covenant in Jer. xxxi.), both oblivion of past sins and a writing of the Law upon the heart.

Vers. 15—17.—And for this cause he is the Mediator of a new testament, that by means of death (literally, *death having taken place*), for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. Here the view of the gospel as a new *διαθήκη* (introduced first in ch. vii. 22, and enlarged on in ch. viii. 6—13) is again brought in. For the word is still *διαθήκη*, though here, for reasons that will appear, rendered "testament" in the A.V. The connecting thought here is—It is because of Christ's sacrifice having been such as has been described, that he is the Mediator of that new and better covenant; it qualified him for being so. A sacrifice, a death, was required for giving it validity

(vers. 16—23), and the character of his sacrifice implies a better covenant than the old, even such a one as Jeremiah foretold. Further, the purpose of his death is said to be "for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant." For in the passage of Jeremiah the defect of the first covenant was based on the transgression of its conditions by man, while under the new one, such transgressions were to be no more remembered. But this could not be without atonement for them; the whole ceremonial of the Law signified this; and also that such atonement could not be except by death. The death of Christ satisfied this requirement; and so the new covenant could come in. So far the course of thought is clear. Nor is there difficulty in understanding the purport of ver. 18, etc., taken by itself, where the "blood-shedding" that inaugurated the first covenant is regarded as typical of that of Christ in the inauguration of the new one. But there is a difficulty about the intervening verses (16, 17), arising from the apparent use of the word *διαθήκη* in a new sense, not otherwise suggested—that of *testament* rather than *covenant*. The verses are, as given in the A.V., For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be (*ἀπερβαί*, a word of which the exact meaning is not clear; some interpret "be brought in, or proved," some "be understood, implied") the death of the testator (*τοῦ διαθεμένου*, equivalent to "him that made it"). For a testament is of force after men are dead (*ἐν νεκροῖς*): otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth (or, *for doth it ever avail while he that made it liveth?* *ἐνὶ ζῶντι*: cf. ch. x. 2; Rom. iii. 6; 1 Cor. xiv. 16; John vii. 26; Luke iii. 15). Now, the word *διαθήκη* itself undoubtedly may bear the sense of "testament." Its general meaning is "disposition," or "settlement;" and it may denote either a compact between living persons, or a will to take effect after the testator's death. In the verses before us it appears to be used specifically in the latter sense. For they express general propositions, which are not true of all covenants, but are true (according to their most obvious sense) of all testaments. Further, this sense is distinctly applicable to the new *διαθήκη*, regarded as the dying Christ's bequest to his Church. Hence, but for the context, we should naturally so understand it in these verses. The difficulties attending this sense are: (1) The word is not used in this specific sense before or afterwards in this Epistle or in Jer. xxxi., which is the basis of the whole argument, or elsewhere, apparently, either in the Old Testament or the New. (2) The sense does not suit the case of the old *διαθήκη*, which was a covenant between the living God and

his people; and there is no intimation of two senses being intended in the two cases: indeed, in the passage before us, the same sense seems to be distinctly implied, since the blood-shedding which inaugurated the old is at once (in ver. 17) spoken of as answering to the death which inaugurated the new, as though death inaugurated both in the same sense. (3) The word, in the sense of *covenant* (equivalent to the Hebrew *berith*), is common in the LXX., expressing an idea familiar to Jews and Jewish Christians, while testamentary dispositions were, as far as we know, unfamiliar to the Hebrews; and, though the Roman testamentary law may have come into use when the Epistle was written, it is thought unlikely that the writer, addressing Hebrews, would have referred to it in illustration of a Divine dispensation, or, if he had, have used a word so well known to them in its traditional sense. (4) Christ is called (here as well as in ch. xii. 24 and xiii. 20) the *Mediator* (*μεσίτης*) of the new *διαθήκη*: but a testament does not require a Mediator, nor, if it has one, can the same person be both mediator and testator. If, however, the sense of *testament* should seem inevitable here, we may explain as follows. Though the word has been used so far in a general sense, yet the writer, on the suggestion of *ἐὰνταυτοῦ γενομένου* in ver. 15, passes in thought at ver. 16 to the specific sense of *testament*, as suiting the case of Christ, the language he uses being sufficient for carrying his readers with him in the transition. Further, though the old *διαθήκη* was not in itself a testament, yet it was typical of that which was; its whole ceremonial foreshadowed the future Testator's death, and so, in a typical sense, it might also itself be called one. Consequently, in ver. 18, the inaugurating sacrifices of the old dispensation are regarded as representing the death of the testator; for they prefigured Christ, through whose death the "eternal inheritance" is bequeathed to man. (In accordance with this view, the Vulgate renders *διαθήκη testamentum* throughout the Epistle, even when the old dispensation is referred to.) As to *ὁ διαθέμενος* (translated "the testator"), it is, according to this view, ultimately God the Father in the new *διαθήκη*, as well as in the old, though, of course, the Godhead could not die. But the Father having placed the whole inheritance destined for mankind in the hands of Christ as Mediator, in his human death the testator died. And thus one of the difficulties above mentioned may be met, viz. that of Christ being regarded both as Testator and Mediator. Christ was, in fact, both—Testator, in that, being one with God, he bequeathed through his death the kingdom appointed unto him by the Father;

Mediator, in that it was through his incarnation only that the "eternal inheritance" willed to us by the Father could be transmitted in the way of testament. So in effect Chrysostom explains. Apposite to this view of the subject are his own words (Luke xxii. 29), "And I appoint (*διατίθεμαι*) unto you a kingdom, as my Father appointed (*διέθετο*) unto me." Here we have the same verb (*διατίθεμαι*) as is used in the Epistle. And though, in the passage from St. Luke, the idea of a *testamentary* appointment is not necessarily implied, yet it is naturally suggested where Christ is speaking on the eve of, and with reference to, his death. There is, however, another view taken (decidedly by Whitby, Ebrard, and in the recent 'Speaker's Commentary'), according to which the idea of a *testament* does not come in at all, the word *διαθήκη* retaining here, as elsewhere, its usual sense of *covenant*. The position is that, though the propositions of vers. 16, 17 are not true of all covenants, yet there is a sense in which they are true of any covenant between God and man; which is the only kind of covenant that the writer has in view, or that his readers would be led to think of by the previous reference to Jer. xxxi., or by the associations of the word *διαθήκη* as used in the Old Testament. The sense in which the propositions are true of such a covenant is thus expressed by Ebrard: "Whenever sinful man will enter into a covenant with the holy God, the man must first die—must first atone for his guilt by death (or must put in a substitute for himself)." This principle is expressed (it is alleged), not only by the sacrifices that inaugurated this covenant of the Law, but also wherever a covenant between God and man is spoken of in the Old Testament; e.g. in the covenant with Abraham (Gen. xv. 8, etc., and Gen. xxii.). In the case of covenants between man and man (as between Abraham and Abimelech, and between Jacob and Laban) there was no need of slain victims, whose life had to be given for that of one of the contracting parties; but there is always expressed such need in the case of a covenant between God and man. Further, the expression, *διαθήκη ἐν νεκροῖς βεβάλα*, is, according to this view, illustrated by Ps. l. 5, where the LXX. has *τοὺς διατίθεντοὺς τῇ διαθήκῃ αὐτοῦ ἐν θανάτῳ* (in the Vulgate, *qui ordinant testamentum ejus super sacrificiis*). The same preposition *ἐν* is used in both passages, and *ἐν θανάτῳ* is supposed to express the same idea as *ἐν νεκροῖς*. This passage from the psalm is certainly much to the point in support of the view before us, serving moreover to meet in some degree one principal objection to it, viz. that it requires *ὁ διαθέμενος* to be understood of the human party to the covenant, and not

of its Divine Author. Such is not the most obvious application of the word, nor the one sanctioned by the quotation from Jeremiah, or by other references to the Divine covenant (see *supra*, ch. viii. 10, and also Gen. xv. 18; Deut. v. 2, 3; Luke xii. 29; Acts iii. 25; as well as Exod. xxiv. 8, quoted below (ver. 20), where *diθήρη*, not *ἐπετέλειτο*, is the word in the LXX. But such is the application in Pa. I. 5, and may be considered, therefore, not untenable. The writer may, indeed, have had the expression in the psalm in his mind when he wrote the verses before us. It appears from what has been said that difficulties attend both the views that have been above explained. It is not here attempted to decide between them.

Ver. 18.—Wherefore neither hath the first (*testament*, A.V.; or, *covenant*) been dedicated without blood. Here the blood of slain victims, which had been essential for the first inauguration of the old *διαθήκη*, is referred to as expressing the principle of vers. 16, 17, viz. that there must be death for a *διαθήκη* (in whatever sense the word may be intended, whether as a *testament* or as a *covenant* between God and man) to take effect. Whichever view we take of the intended import of the word, the reference is equally apposite in support of the introductory proposition of ver. 15; which is to the effect that Christ's death (*θανάτου γεμένου*), fulfilling the symbolism of the old inaugurating sacrifices, qualified him as Mediator of a new *διαθήκη*.

Vers. 19, 20.—For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the covenant (A.V. *testament*) which God enjoined unto you (strictly, *to you-ward*; i.e. enjoined to me for you). The reference is to Exod. xxiv. 8—9, where the account is given of the inauguration of the covenant between God and the Israelites through Moses. He "came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do." And then he wrote all the words of the Lord in a book, and builded an altar under the mount, and sacrifices were offered, and half of the blood was sprinkled on the altar, and the words were read from the book, and again the people undertook to observe them, and the other half of the blood was sprinkled on the people, and so the covenant was ratified. The essential part of the whole ceremony being the "blood-shedding," it is of no importance for the general argument

that the account in Exodus is not exactly followed. The variations from it are these:

(1) The mention of goats as well as calves or bullocks—of water—of the scarlet wool and hyssop—and of the sprinkling of the book, instead of the altar, as in Exodus. (2) The words spoken by Moses are differently given, *τοῦτο* being substituted for *ἰδοὺ*, *ὁ Θεός* for *Κύριος*, and *ἐπετέλειτο* for *diθήρη*. On these variations we may observe that the mention of goats may have been suggested to the writer's mind by the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement, previously alluded to; and it is not inconsistent with the account in Exodus, where the victims used for the "burnt offerings" are not specified, only the bullocks for "peace offerings." Nor is there inconsistency in the other additions to the ceremonial. The scarlet wool and hyssop were the usual instruments of aspersion (a bunch of the latter being apparently bound by the former to a stick of cedar; cf. Exod. xii. 22; Lev. xiv. 50; Numb. xix. 6, 18). It may have been usual to mix water with the blood used for aspersion, if only to prevent coagulation (see Lightfoot on John xix. 34), though in some cases certainly also with a symbolical meaning (cf. Lev. xiv. 5, 50); and, if the book was, as it was likely to be, on the altar when the latter was sprinkled (Exod. xxiv. 6, 7), it would itself partake of this sprinkling, and, being thus consecrated, would be then taken from the altar to be read from to the people and to receive their assent, previously to the sprinkling of themselves with the moiety of the blood reserved. Probably the whole account, as here given, was the traditional one at the time of writing (see below, on ver. 21). With regard to the slightly altered form of the words spoken by Moses, it is an interesting suggestion that the writer may have had in his mind our Lord's corresponding words in the institution of the Eucharist, beginning in all the accounts with *τοῦτο*, and being thus worded: in St. Luke, *Τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐν τῷ αἵματί μου, τὸ διὰ τῶν ὁμῶν ἐκχυνόμενον*; and in St. Matthew and St. Mark, *Τοῦτο ἐστὶ τὸ αἶμα μου, τὸ τῆς καινῆς διαθήκης, τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυνόμενον*, St. Matthew adding *εἰς ἑφесιν ἁμαρτιῶν*. That Christ in these words referred to those of Moses is obvious, speaking of his own outpoured blood as the antitype of that wherewith the old *διαθήκη* was dedicated; and it is likely that the writer of the Epistle would have Christ's words in his mind.

Ver. 21.—Moreover the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry be sprinkled in like manner with the blood. This refers to a subsequent occasion, the tabernacle not having been constructed at the time of the

inauguration of the covenant,—probably to the dedication of the tabernacle, enjoined Exod. xl, and described Lev. viii. It is true that no sprinkling of the tabernacle or its furniture with blood is mentioned in the Pentateuch; only the anointing of them with oil (Lev. viii. 10). But the garments of Aaron and his sons are said on that occasion to have been sprinkled with the blood as well as with the anointing oil (ch. viii. 30), and Josephus (*Ant.* iii. 8. 6) says that this blood-sprinkling was extended also to the tabernacle and its vessels (*τὴν τε σκηνὴν καὶ τὰ περὶ αὐτὴν σκεῦη*). Here, as well as in ver. 19, our writer may be supposed to follow the traditional account, with which there is still nothing in the Pentateuch inconsistent. Be it observed again that the force of the argument does not depend on these added details, but on the general principle, abundantly expressed in the original record, which is asserted in the following verse.

Ver. 22.—And almost (rather, *we may almost say that*) all things are according to the Law purified with blood; and without shedding of blood there is no remission. The essentiality of blood, which is “the life of all flesh,” for atonement and consequent remission, is emphatically asserted in Lev. xvii. 11, which expresses the principle of the whole sacrificial ritual. The idea seems to be that the life of man is forfeit to Divine justice (cf. Gen. ii. 17), and so blood, representing life, must be offered instead of his life for atonement.

Ver. 23.—It was therefore necessary (*i.e.* in accordance with the principle above expressed) that the patterns (rather, *copies*, see ch. viii. 5, *supra*) of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. According to the view taken under ch. viii. 2 and ch. ix. 11, “the heavenly things” here must be taken to denote the corresponding realities in the heavenly sphere of things to which Christ has gone. But how can they themselves be said to require purification or cleansing? The mundane tabernacle did, being itself conceived as polluted by human sin; but how so of the unpolluted heavenly tabernacle? The answer may be that the expressions, chosen to suit the case of the earthly type, need not be pressed in all their details as applying to the heavenly sanctuary. With regard to the latter, they may be meant only to express that, though it be itself pure, yet *man* requires purification for access to it, and that for this purpose “better sacrifices” are required. “In hac apodocii verbum καθαρῶς καθαί, mundari, subauditum, facit hypallagem: nam celestia per se sunt pura, sed nos purificandi fuimus,

ut illa possemus capessere” (Bengel). The general meaning is obvious enough. Commentators sometimes raise needless difficulties, and may sometimes even miss the essential purport of a passage by the too constant application of the critical microscope. If, however, it be thought necessary to find a sense in which the heavenly sanctuary may be said to need purification, the idea may be the appeasing of Divine wrath which bars the entrance of mankind.

Ver. 24.—For not into holy places made with hands did Christ enter, which are figures (*ἀντίτυπα, antitypes*) of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of (literally, *before the face of*) God for us. This verse confirms the view that “the heavenly things” of ver. 23 denoted the heavenly regions into which Christ is entered. *Ἄγια* at the beginning of the verse may be better translated “holy place” (as at vers. 12 and 25) rather than “places,” since here the heavenly counterpart of the holy of holies, as distinguished from the “first tabernacle,” appears to be in view, viz. “heaven itself,” the heaven of heavens, the immediate presence or “face” of God, the “throne of the Majesty on high,” to which Christ passed through the intermediate heavens. There he *now* (the perpetual *now* of the new era of accomplished redemption), in his humanity, in behalf of and representing all humanity, beholds for ever the very face of the eternal God, which Moses could not see and live, and of which the typical high priest saw from year to year but the emblem, in transitory glimpses, through intervening clouds of incense. The word ἀντίτυπα, like *συνέγραμματα* in ver. 23, expresses the idea of the earthly sanctuary being a visible representation answering to a heavenly reality. The original τύπος (*type*) was shown to Moses in the mount (ch. viii. 5); what was constructed by him on the earth below was the *antitype* to it. The words τύπος and ἀντίτυπος are elsewhere used to express respectively a prophetic figure of a fulfilment to come and the fulfilment itself (as in Rom. v. 14 and 1 Pet. iii. 21, baptism in the latter text being regarded as the ἀντίτυπον of the Deluge), but still with the same idea of the *type* being prior to the *antitype*, the latter answering to the former.

Vers. 25, 26.—Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others (*i.e.* blood not his own, ἀλλοτρίῳ); for them must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now (probably *πρῶτῃ*, not *νῦν*, meaning “as it is”) once at the end of the ages hath he appeared (rather, *been manifested*, *πεφανερωται*) to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Here (as above noted) the idea of ἐφάραξ in ver. 12 is taken up. That

Christ's offering of himself is once for all, needing no repetition, follows from the view of it already given, viz. that it is a perpetual presentation of himself, after fully availing sacrifice of himself, before the very face of God. That this is of necessity once for all is now further shown by the consideration that repeated offerings of himself would involve the impossible condition of repeated deaths. Observe that "offer himself" in ver. 25 does not refer to the death upon the cross, but to the intercession before the eternal mercy-seat after accomplished atonement, answering to the high priest's entrance, with the blood of previous sacrifice, within the veil. The death itself is denoted in ver. 26 by *παθὲν* ("suffered"). The argument rests on the principle, already established as being signified by the whole of the ancient ritual, that, for acceptable intercession in behalf of man, previous death or blood-shedding is in every case required. But why add "since the foundation of the world"? We must supply the thought of the retrospective efficacy of Christ's atonement. Ever since sin entered, man needed atonement, signified, but not effected, by the ancient sacrifices. Christ's one offering of himself has supplied this primeval need, availing, not only for the present and future, but also for all past ages. This view was definitely expressed, with reference to "transgressions which were under the first covenant," in ver. 15, and, though not repeated here, is prominent in the writer's mind (cf. Rom. iii. 25, where God's righteousness is said to have been shown in Christ with regard to "the passing over of sins done aforesaid, in the forbearance of God," as well as to justification of believers now; also Rom. v., where the effect of Christ's obedience is declared to be coextensive with that of Adam's transgression). This view accounts for "since the foundation of the world," the idea being that, the transgressions requiring atonement having been since then, repeated deaths since then would have been needed had not Christ's one offering of himself availed for all time, just as repeated sacrifices were needed for the high priest's symbolical yearly intercessions. The question is not asked, nor is any reason given, why this one all-sufficient offering was deferred till so long after the need began. It is enough to know that such has been, in fact, the Divine will, viz. that not till the fulness of time was come—not till the end (or consummation) of the long preceding sinful ages—should the Redeemer once for all be manifested for atonement. The phrase, *ἐν συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων*, seems certainly to imply the idea, otherwise known to have been prevalent in

the apostolic age, of the end of all things being close at hand; and this expectation further accounts for the reference to the past rather than the future in the expression, "since the foundation of the world." For, with regard to the future, the second coming of Christ was the one great idea present to the minds of Christians, the intervening time being regarded by them as but the dawn of coming day (see, on this head, what was said under ch. i. 2). The strong expression, *ἐν ἀθέτησιν ἁμαρτίας* (for the sense of ἀθέτησις, cf. ch. vii. 18, where it means "abrogation"), used as it here is with reference to all the transgressions of the ages past, though not to be pressed so as to invalidate what is elsewhere said of the future penal consequences of all wilful and unrepented sin, may still be cited among the texts supporting the view of those who "trust the larger hope."

Vers. 27, 28.—And inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this judgment: so the Christ also, once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, without sin, to them that look for him, unto salvation. The Divine ordinance concerning mankind in general has its analogy in the truth concerning Christ, who was made like unto us in all things, and who represents humanity. As human life, with all its works, comes to an end in death, and only judgment follows, so Christ's death once for all completed his ministerial work, and nothing remains for him to do but to return as Judge in glory—he *judicaturus*, men *judicandi*. "To bear the sins of many" is taken from Isa. liii. 12. For similar use of the word ἀναφέρειν, cf. Numb. xiv. 33, LXX.; and especially 1 Pet. ii. 24, *Τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν αὐτὸς ἀνήνεγκεν ἐν τῷ σώματι αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον*, which expresses the idea of Christ's taking our sins upon himself and bearing them up to the cross, and so removing them. The ideas of bearing and of taking away may thus be both implied. In contrast with this is the *χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας* ("without, or apart from, sin") when he shall appear again. For then he will have been, as he is now, removed from it altogether—from its burden and its surroundings; it is in glory only that he will then appear. And so also "to them that look for him" his appearing will be "unto salvation" only. They, too, will have done with sin. The insertion of the words, "to them that look for him," precludes the conclusion that it will be so to all. The many passages that express the doom of those who shall be set on the left hand, whatever they imply, retain their awful meaning (cf. especially *infra*, ch. x. 27).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—10.—*Arrangements of the first covenant.* The Epistle to the Hebrews is the New Testament Leviticus. In itself, the book of the Jewish ritual is rather dry reading. "Nothing can well be duller or more dingy than the appearance of a stained-glass cathedral window to one who is looking on it from the outside of the building; but, when you enter and gaze at it from within, the whole is aglow with beauty" (Dr. W. M. Taylor). Now, from this Epistle we learn to read Leviticus with the bright gospel sunlight for a background, and we thus discover how rich that ancient Scripture is, in instruction regarding the way of access to God, and the means of fellowship with him.

I. THE HEBREW SANCTUARY. (Vers. 1—5.) The tabernacle was the Divine palace, the symbol of Jehovah's residence among his ancient people. There was a gracious presence of God in Israel which other nations did not enjoy. Mention is made here of the two chambers of the sacred tent, each of which had a "veil" covering the entrance, and of the principal articles of furniture in these two chambers respectively. 1. *The holy place.* (Ver. 2.) This anterior apartment was oblong in shape, being thirty feet in length, fifteen in width, and fifteen in height. Three articles are named as belonging to it. (1) *The lamp-stand*: symbol of the spiritual light which Christ imparts to his Church. (2) *The table*, with (3) the *shewbread*: symbol of the spiritual meat provided by God to strengthen for his service. 2. *The holy of holies.* (Vers. 3—5.) This innermost recess of the sanctuary, separated from the outer chamber by a richly wrought curtain, was the dwelling-place of Jehovah. It was a smaller apartment than the other, measuring fifteen feet in length, breadth, and height, and thus forming a perfect square. Seven things are named as belonging to it. (1) *The golden censer.* Whether we understand by this the altar of incense itself, which stood in the holy place close to "the second veil," or the actual censer which was carried from the altar into the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement—in either case the symbol is that of the heart's devotion. (2) *The ark.* This was the most sacred piece of furniture in the tabernacle; indeed, the purpose of the whole structure was just to accommodate the ark, as the central symbol of the presence and majesty of the covenant God of Israel. (3) *The pot of manna*: emblem of the true Bread from heaven, which feeds the mind with truth, the conscience with righteousness, and the heart with love. (4) *Aaron's staff*: a type of the intransferable priesthood of Christ, and a symbol of the spiritual priesthood of believers. (5) *The two tables of the Law*: the revelation to the Jews of Jehovah's righteous will, which should be written on the hearts of men. (6) *The cherubim*: representing the angels, and surrounding the luminous cloud of "glory" which appeared above the ark. (7) *The mercy-seat*: the footstool of God, and the propitiatory lid of the ark; which, sprinkled with atoning blood, covered the sins of the people, by concealing from the Divine eye the Law which they had violated. The Hebrew sanctuary in its innermost symbolism thus represented the wondrous scheme of redemption. It shows us God's throne of grace standing upon his righteousness (Ps. lxxxv. 10).

II. ITS SERVICES. (Vers. 6, 7.) While the outer court of the tabernacle was open to the whole congregation of Israel, except to such as might at any time be ceremonially unclean, only the sons of Aaron were allowed to minister at the altar, or within the sanctuary proper. 1. *The holy place was for the daily ministration of the ordinary priests.* (Ver. 6.) Their duties were such as these: They sprinkled the blood of the sin offerings before the "second veil;" they lighted and fed and trimmed the seven lamps of the candelabrum; they offered incense upon the golden altar; they changed the shewbread every sabbath day. 2. *The holy of holies was for the annual ministration of the high priest alone.* (Ver. 7.) None of the ordinary priests ever dared to enter the inner sanctuary, or even to look into it. And even the high priest could only do so on one day in the year—on the great annual fast day, the Day of Atonement. In the course of that day, however, he went into the holy of holies at least three times: first, with the censer and incense; secondly, with the blood of the bullock, for his own and the priests' sins; and, thirdly, with the blood of the goat, for the people's sins. He went in "not without blood," the presentation of the blood being necessary to the completion of the sacrifice.

III. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BOTH. (Vers. 8—10.) These verses remind us that the institutions of Judaism were established by the Holy Spirit himself as a symbol of Old Testament facts, and as a prefiguration of the privileges of the new covenant spoken of in ch. viii. 8—12. It was not Moses who ordained the Levitical ceremonial; it was the Holy Ghost. And by this means the Spirit taught the great truth that on the ground of nature access to God is barred for all sinful men; and that even under the "first covenant" of grace this blessing was only most imperfectly realized. The division of the sacred tent into two apartments, and the exclusion of the ordinary priests from the holy of holies, illustrated the great defect of the old covenant. The nature of the services, too, reflected its imperfections. The rites of Judaism cleansed the body from ceremonial defilement; but they could not wash the soul from sin. They involved, indeed, a continual remembrance of sins, rather than a putting away of sins for ever. And yet, notwithstanding this, the tabernacle-worship was a bright promise and prophecy of the "opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers" at the time of rectification foretold by Jeremiah (xxxi. 31—34).

Vers. 11—14.—*Superiority of the new covenant.* The advent of the Messiah has removed the defects suggested by the Mosaic ritual. He has obtained for the true Israel those great spiritual blessings which "the first covenant" was powerless to bestow. These verses indicate various elements of superiority. The new covenant has provided—

I. A BETTER HIGH PRIEST. (Ver. 11.) Our priestly Mediator is "Christ" the Anointed. He has been divinely ordained, equipped, and accredited. He is a better High Priest than Aaron, because the Minister of a better dispensation. The "good things" denote the blessings of the new covenant; and these are described as "to come," because they had been always promised and expected in connection with the advent of the Messiah. How joyful the tidings to our guilty, sin-deflowered, distracted world, that its true Priest has "come"! He has assumed our nature; he has lived and died; he has risen and ascended; he has "entered in once for all" into the true sanctuary.

II. A NOBLER TABERNACLE. (Ver. 11.) The sacred tent of the Hebrews had, doubtless, many excellences. It was a costly erection. Its arrangements were "a parable" (ver. 9) which instructed the Jews in spiritual truth. The ark was an emblem of the Divine majesty. The cherubic figures were "cherubim of glory," for Jehovah dwelt in symbol between them. Yet, after all, the Jewish tabernacle was only an earthly structure. It was "made with hands." But our High Priest ministers in "the greater and more perfect tabernacle." The place of his priestly service is the highest heavens. The true tabernacle is "not of this creation;" it is in the unseen—in the immediate presence of Jehovah. And the work of Christ there is to interpose and intercede for his people. Every act of saving power results directly from the expression of his will, as our Advocate at the bar of God.

III. A RICHER SACRIFICE. (Vers. 12—14.) Salvation comes to us as the result of satisfaction rendered to Divine justice. We are not saved by receiving Christ's doctrine, or by observing a Christian ritual, or by following Christ's example, or by imbibing moral influence from him as a Teacher and Martyr. Christ saves us "by the sacrifice of himself." As he laid down his life for us, and as "the blood is the life," he is said to have "entered into the holy place" "through his own blood." How much richer and more powerful is this blood than that which was shed upon the brazen altar of the tabernacle! The latter contained only the principle of brute life. But Christ's is: 1. *Human blood.* Our High Priest is a real man, woman-born—our own mother's Son. He is "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh." So he yielded himself up intelligently and voluntarily as our Sacrifice. 2. *Holy blood.* Jesus "offered himself without blemish unto God" (ver. 14). His earthly life was absolutely faultless. He is the only perfect specimen of humanity that has ever lived upon earth—the one "Son of man" who did not share in human corruption and condemnation. 3. *Heavenly blood.* The Man Christ Jesus had an "eternal Spirit" (ver. 14); i.e. he possessed the Divine nature. He is personally and literally God. And it is his Deity that gives to his death its marvellous significance. No creature-blood could atone for our sins; but the sacrifice of Christ is of infinite value, because there resides in him "the power of an endless life."

IV. A MORE THOROUGH CLEANSING. (Vers. 13, 14.) The writer concedes that the Levitical sin offerings did purify. One purpose of their appointment was that they might effect legal or ceremonial cleansing. "The blood of goats and bulls," which was presented for the collected guilt of Israel once a year, consecrated the Jew ceremonially to the worship and service of Jehovah. In like manner the sprinkling of "the ashes of a red heifer," mixed with water, removed legal defilement from the person who had touched a dead body (Numb. xix. 2—9). But the blood of Christ purifies from a deeper pollution. It cleanses the "conscience." It is the God-provided solvent for the stains of sin. It can

"Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart."

This blood purifies from "dead works"—those deeds which are done by dead souls, and which, however excellent some of them may appear when viewed in themselves, are yet of no avail to recommend to the Divine favour. Under the new covenant the conscience is cleansed so thoroughly that the service of God becomes a constant joy to the believer's soul. The Divine statutes become his "songs," and he learns to "run in the way of God's commandments."

V. A MORE BLESSED REDEMPTION. Some of the positive elements of the Christian salvation are indicated in these verses. Those had not been "made manifest" under the old covenant. 1. *Perfect access to God.* The subject of access is the nerve-thought of this whole section of the treatise. The worshipper under the new covenant, being cleansed through the "one offering" of Christ, is admitted into the immediate presence of Jehovah. He stands within the "second veil," that veil being now "rent in twain" (Rom. v. 1, 2). 2. *Full freedom to serve God.* (Ver. 14.) A guilt-stained soul can perform only "dead works;" but the spirit that is washed in the blood of Christ's atonement begins immediately to be of use to its Redeemer. Our High Priest has shed his blood, not only to render us safe, but to make us holy; not only to deliver us from God's wrath, but from our own wickedness. So soon as Christ destroys "the body of sin" within us, we discover that it is our "reasonable service" to present our persons "a living sacrifice." 3. *The gift of eternal life.* (Ver. 12.) The gospel salvation redeems both soul and body, finally and for ever. It saves, not only from the curse of the Law, but from all evil. "Eternal redemption" expresses the sum total of the benefits which accrue from Christ's mediation, and includes the consummation of the plan of grace in the heavenly world. It denotes "the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory."

Vers. 15—22.—*Ratification by blood.* Here the writer pauses in his argument regarding the superiority of Christ's sacrifice to the sacrifices of the Law, and directs attention to an important point of similarity between the old covenant and the new. This passage is a serious *crux*. It has perplexed the most eminent commentators. The great question is, whether *διαθήκη* should be translated "covenant" or "testament" in vers. 16 and 17. For ourselves, we have come to the conclusion that as this Greek word does not bear the meaning of "testament" or "will" in any other part of Scripture, and as it is unquestionably used in the sense of "covenant" in the immediate context (ch. viii. 6—13), as well as in vers. 15, 18—20 of this very passage, we are compelled, in spite of opposing considerations, to attach to the word the sense of "covenant" in vers. 16 and 17 also. Moses did not make a will at Mount Sinai, the provisions of which could only be carried into effect after his death. Neither did Christ speak of a will when he instituted the Lord's Supper in the upper room—using the words of Moses. The one reference throughout the paragraph before us is to a covenant, or rather to the two covenants which are being compared and contrasted in this section of the treatise. It is most unfortunate that the two great parts into which Holy Scripture is divided should be designated among the English-speaking nations by the word "testaments," which is confessedly a mistranslation. Rather, the Hebrew oracles ought to have been called "The Book of the Old Covenant;" and the Christian Scriptures "The Book of the New Covenant."

I. IN OLDEN TIMES COVENANTS WERE SEALED BY THE DEATH OF VICTIMS. "For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the ratifying victim. For

a covenant is of force where there hath been death; for doth it ever avail while the ratifying victim liveth?" (vers. 16, 17). The Hebrew word for a covenant means primarily "a cutting;" the reference being to a common custom among the ancients of dividing into two the animals slain for the purpose of ratification, that the contracting parties might pass between the pieces (Gen. xv. 9, 10, 17; Jer. xxxiv. 18, 19). It is certain that in the oldest times of Scripture history, covenants were sealed by means of sacrifice. God's covenant with Noah (Gen. viii. 20—ix. 17), and his covenant with Abraham (Gen. xv. 9—21), were thus ratified. And it is probable that the prevalent custom among both Jews and Gentiles of confirming contracts in this manner originated in the Divine appointment of animal sacrifice as a type of the atonement of Christ.

II. THE "FIRST" OR MOSAIC COVENANT WAS THUS SEALED. (Vers. 18—22.) This old covenant, made at Mount Sinai, comprised the ten commandments and the body of laws contained in Exod. xxi.—xxiii. These laws were called "The Book of the Covenant." They were the first rough outline of the Mosaic code which Jehovah gave to his people. In Exod. xxiv. 3—8 there is a description of the ceremonial which is here referred to. The awe-stricken people were gathered before an altar erected at the foot of the mountain. The book of the covenant was read over to them. Twelve young men, acting as priests, shed the blood of certain propitiatory victims. Then Moses sprinkled half of the blood upon the altar and upon the book of the covenant, and the other half upon the assembled multitude. Some of the circumstances of the ceremonial which are alluded to in ver. 19 are not mentioned in the narrative of Exodus; but the writer of our Epistle refers to them as matter of well-known and thoroughly authenticated Hebrew tradition. This solemn ratification of the Sinaitic Law shows that God and the sinner can only be made "at one" through a covenant of blood; and thus, the words spoken by Moses when he sprinkled the blood (ver. 20) were adopted by the Saviour in instituting the Lord's Supper (Matt. xxvi. 28), to signify the confirmation of the "new" and "eternal covenant" through the shedding of his own blood. But, besides this, the tabernacle and its furniture were dedicated with the sprinkling of blood; and blood continued to be used in connection with nearly all the rites of which the tabernacle was the centre (vers. 21, 22). The ceremonial Law was, in fact, one vast system of blood-symbols. The crimson stream never ceased to flow upon the brazen altar; blood was put upon the altar of incense; the holy of holies itself was sprinkled with it. There was blood everywhere;—no access to God except by blood. The Jews were thus taught, with solemn and continual iteration, that the forgiveness of sins can only be obtained by means of a substitutionary atonement.

III. THE NEW COVENANT HAS BEEN SEALED BY THE DEATH OF CHRIST. (Ver. 15.) This death was at once a sacrifice for sin and a covenant offering. The blood of Jesus has done for the new covenant, in sealing it, what the blood of the Mosaic sacrifices did for the old. His death as the ratifying Victim took place "of necessity." It was necessary, not certainly because of the ancient custom of sealing covenants by sacrifice; rather, God had appointed sacrifice, and employed it in his gracious communications with his ancient people, in order to prefigure thereby the true meaning and purpose of the death of Christ. The necessity of the atonement was neither hypothetical, nor governmental, nor a necessity of expediency. It arose out of the nature of God, as infinitely holy, just, and righteous. "For this cause" that by his death he has paid a full ransom for human sin, "he is the Mediator of a new covenant"—of that better economy promised long before by Jeremiah (ch. viii. 8—13). The sacrifice of Christ is of such transcendent efficacy that it has availed to wash away the guilt of all God's people who lived under the former imperfect covenant; as well as to secure for all saints, whether Jewish or Christian, the inestimable gift of eternal life.

LESSONS. 1. We should avail ourselves of the benefits of the new covenant. 2. Have confidence that all its promises will be fulfilled. 3. Cherish grateful love to the Lord Jesus, who has sealed the covenant with his blood. 4. Celebrate the Lord's Supper with intelligence and joy. 5. Consecrate our lives to the service of our Redeemer.

Vers. 23—28.—*Perfection of Christ's atonement.* In these verses the writer contrasts the incompleteness of the Mosaic sacrifices with the finality which attaches to the sacrificial work of the Lord Jesus.

I. THREE GREAT CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES. These rest respectively upon three facts,

viz. the death and the ascension of Christ, which are matters of history; and the second advent, which is still future. 1. *Christ died as a Sacrifice for sin.* (Ver. 28.) His death was a stupendous event—being that of a Divine Person. It did not occur as the result of disease, or of natural decay. It was not an accidental death. It was judicially inflicted. Sentence was pronounced upon Jesus, not merely in the high priest's palace and in Pilate's judgment-hall, but in the court of heaven. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him;" "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." 2. *He ascended to heaven as our Priest.* (Ver. 24.) Of the three offices which Jesus executes, the prophetic occupied the most prominent place while he was on earth; his priestly office has seemed to come into the foreground now that he has gone to heaven; and his kingly functions will appear to be most fully discharged after the second advent. Why was it necessary that he should enter heaven as our Priest? (1) *To purify the heavenly tabernacle.* (Ver. 23.) The Hebrew sanctuary was sprinkled with blood to cleanse it from ceremonial pollution. The true tabernacle may be said to be purified with Christ's blood in this sense, that his atonement has made it a righteous thing for God to receive sinful men into his favour, and to give them grace and glory. (2) *To present himself before God as our Representative.* (Ver. 24.) He appears "before the face of God for us." His very presence in heaven is a perpetual and prevalent intercession. On the basis of his own finished work he introduces each believer to the Father, and acts as his Advocate before the throne. He lifts up in heaven his nail-pierced hand, and pleads for "mercy" to us, and for "grace to help." 3. *He shall come again to consummate the salvation of his people.* (Ver. 28.) On the Day of Atonement, after Aaron had sprinkled the mercy-seat with the blood, he came forth from the holy of holies, re clothed himself in his splendid vestments of blue and red and purple, trimmed with pomegranates and golden bells, and appeared outside to bless the waiting multitudes. So our High Priest, although he still tarries in the heavenly tabernacle, filling it with the fragrant incense of his intercession, shall appear at the end of the ages, wearing the robes of his immortal glory, to say to his expectant people, "Come, ye blessed of my Father." He shall appear "apart from sin." When he came the first time, he was "made to be sin on our behalf" although he "knew no sin;" but at his second advent he shall not again assume the dreadful burden. He shall appear "unto salvation," i.e. to complete the redemption of his people. By his first coming he saved their souls; at his second coming he shall save their bodies. Or, rather, at his first coming he paid down the ransom-price of our redemption; while at his second coming he shall receive the final instalment of his purchased possession.

II. THE DOCTRINAL FOCUS OF THE PASSAGE. The chief point of thought for the sake of which these three doctrines are adduced is marked by the repetition of the word "once" in vers. 26—28; and by the contrast between this "once" and the "often" or "year by year" of ver. 25. Christ died only once; he ascended only once; he shall come again only once. Why is it that, while Aaron entered the Hebrew holy of holies every year, Jesus Christ has gone into the heavenly sanctuary "once for all"? Two reasons are assigned: the one, that to repeat his sacrifice would be *unnatural*; and the other, that to do so is *unnecessary*. 1. *It would be unnatural.* (Vers. 27, 28.) Jesus Christ is the Son of man, and in all things he has been "made like unto his brethren." Now, it is a human thing to die once; and the death of every child of Adam will be followed by his appearance at the general judgment. So "it was in harmony with the law of mortality in this world that Christ should die but once. There would have been something unnatural in his dying and rising, and dying and rising, again and again without end" (Dr. Lindsay). The Lord's death and his second advent are parallel arrangements to what is the common lot of man. 2. *It is unnecessary.* This reason is still more satisfying, and it receives great prominence in the verses before us. It was not needful that Christ should die and ascend and come again oftener than once; for: (1) *He has effected a real atonement for sin.* (Ver. 28.) By his death he has "put away sin." He has accomplished its abolition. That is to say, he has reconciled a guilty world to God, and procured peace of conscience for the believer. His obedience and sufferings were those of a Divine Person—of him who is "the Effulgence of God's glory, and the very Image of his substance;" and therefore his death constituted an atonement, not only of transcendent magnificence, but of infinite merit. (2) *The efficacy of the atonement extends over all the past.* (Ver. 26.) Its saving influence

has been retrospective. Daniel and David, Elijah and Enoch, Abraham and Adam, and all the Old Testament saints, lived really under the shadow of Calvary. The cross of Christ has been powerful to redeem from "the transgressions that were under the first covenant" (ver. 15). And any devout men belonging to the vast heathen world whom God may have accepted notwithstanding that they had never heard the gospel, have been saved on the ground of that one atonement. But if the blood which was shed once had virtue to cover all sin in the past, its efficacy may be expected to extend equally into the future. (3) *Christ's atonement has opened the door of mercy to the world.* (Ver. 28.) The Saviour has borne "the sins of many," i.e. of myriads, of mankind in general. Although he cherishes a special love for his own people, and although he gave himself in a special sense for them, he is "the Propitiation for the whole world" (1 John ii. 2). His cross points out the way of life to all men, and invites every one to walk in that way. Not one sinner shall finally perish because no room could be found for him in the great atonement. The perdition of every lost man shall be entirely his own fault. And, seeing all these things are so, it is evident that Christ needed to offer himself but once.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 4, 5.—*The ark of the covenant, a symbol of redemptive truth.* "The ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein . . . were the tables of the covenant; and over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat." Jewish solemnities were types of Christian truths and relations. The furniture of their sacred courts possessed symbolical significance. Their religious institutions were parables of spiritual and saving truths. Deep significance of this kind attached to the ark of the covenant. We shall regard it as setting forth certain facts and features of God's redemptive relations with men. In it we discover—

I. *THE RECOGNITION OF LAW IN GOD'S REDEPTIVE RELATIONS WITH MEN.* "The ark of the covenant . . . wherein were the tables of the covenant." The two tables containing the ten commandments, in accordance with Divine directions, were deposited in the ark (Exod. xxv. 16, 21; xl. 20). Thus Law was recognized and honoured there: 1. *As a sacred thing.* The tables were in the most holy place and in the most venerated receptacle which that place contained. Law is a benevolent thing, a holy thing. It is at the very centre of all things. In the material universe, in human history, and in Divine redemption, law is present everywhere, and operative everywhere. It is of a religious nature, of a Divine nature. 2. *As a permanent thing.* Ceremonial laws pass away; moral laws are abiding. The "ten words" given on Sinai in their essential characteristics are as binding now as they were under the earlier dispensation. Our Lord endorsed and enforced them. He said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," etc. (Matt. xxii. 37—40). The everlasting continuance of law is essential to the order and well-being of the universe of God. The redemption which is by Christ Jesus aims at the establishment of the Law of God in blessed and perpetual supremacy, and the inspiration and confirmation in man of the spirit and habit of cheerful conformity to that Law. There is law in heaven. The ark of the covenant is there. "And there was opened the temple of God that is heaven; and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant" (Rev. xi. 19). 3. *As a witness against man.* Man had broken this holy Law. In his fallen and sinful condition he could not thoroughly keep it. Hence it bore witness against him. The tables of the covenant were also called "the two tables of testimony," and they testified to the transgressions and failures of men. "By the Law is the knowledge of sin." And in this way the Law witnessed to man's need of mercy and forgiveness and spiritual power.

II. *THE MANIFESTATION OF GRACE IN GOD'S REDEPTIVE RELATIONS WITH MEN.* The ark of the covenant was covered, and the covering was called "the mercy-seat." The word which is here rendered "mercy-seat" is applied to our Saviour: "Whom God hath set forth to be a Propitiation," etc. (Rom. iii. 25). There was a manifestation of grace: 1. *In the mercy-seat itself.* It was the lid of the chest which contained the tables of the Law. Those tables testified against man, and the mercy-seat hid, as it were, their testimony from the eyes of the Holy One who dwelt between the cherubim.

The mercy-seat covered and concealed the accusing tables. Hence arose the poetical view of forgiveness as a covering of sin. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." 2. *In the symbolical atonement which was made upon the mercy-seat.* The covering of the tables of testimony was not in itself sufficient to put away the guilt of the people. For this atonement also was necessary. Hence on the great Day of Atonement the high priest was required to sprinkle the blood of the sin offerings upon the mercy-seat to "make an atonement, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins" (Lev. xvi. 11—16). To the mercy-seat in this aspect there is reference in several verses of the Scripture, or at least the verb used in these verses (*kaphar*) suggests such a reference. "Our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away" (Ps. lxxv. 8); "He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity" (Ps. lxxviii. 38); "To make reconciliation for iniquity" (Dan. ix. 24). In this the mercy-seat pointed to the Christ, the great Atonement, the true Propitiatory, "whom God set forth to be a Propitiation, through faith by his blood" (Rom. iii. 24—26). Thus the manifestation of the grace of God in his redemptive relations with man was symbolized in the covering of the ark of the covenant. Moreover, grace and Law appear here as connected and harmonious. Rightly understood, Law itself is an expression of Divine grace, and Divine grace aims to establish the universal reign of Law, which is but another word for the reign of God. The mercy-seat was "God's throne of grace founded upon Law." Here "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

III. THE ATTITUDE AND ACTION OF ANGELS IN RESPECT TO GOD'S REDEPTIVE RELATIONS WITH MEN. "Above it cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat." We regard the cherubim as emblems of angelic powers; and their position here suggests that they are: 1. *The solemn guardians of God's holy Law.* They kept constant watch over the "tables of testimony." They are deeply interested in the maintenance of moral law. They "are in Scripture evermore the attendants, and bearers up, of the throne of God." When man rebelled against the authority of that throne, they were appointed ministers for punishing the transgressors (Gen. iii. 24). 2. *The interested students of God's redemptive relations with men.* The cherubim were represented as looking intently and constantly upon the ark of the covenant. "Toward the mercy-seat shall the faces of the cherubim be," etc. (Exod. xxv. 20, 21). "Which things the angels desire to look into" (1 Pet. i. 12). "Unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places is made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. iii. 10). 3. *The willing servants in promoting the successful issue of God's redemptive relations with men.* "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?" (see on ch. i. 14).

IV. THE REVELATION OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN HIS REDEPTIVE RELATIONS WITH MEN. "Cherubim of glory." They were so called because they appeared to bear up the visible symbol of the presence of God, which in the Old Testament is sometimes called "the glory." God promised to commune with his people "from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony" (Exod. xxv. 22). "Moses heard the voice of one speaking unto him from between the two cherubim" (Numb. vii. 89). God was said to "dwell between the cherubim" (1 Sam. iv. 4; 2 Sam. vi. 2; Ps. lxxx. 1; xcix. 1). God sometimes manifested his presence here in a luminous cloud, which the Jews called the Shechinah, and here he was always thought of as present. Jesus Christ our Redeemer is the true Shechinah. He is "the Effulgence of the Father's glory, and the very Image of his substance." He is the truest, the highest, the fullest manifestation of God to man. And in spiritual presence God dwells with his people now. The Holy Spirit is present with every godly soul. And Christians are inspired by the mighty and blessed hope that when this life in the body ends, they will follow their Forerunner within the veil and see God "even as he is."—W. J.

Vers. 11, 12.—*The pre-eminent priesthood.* "But Christ being come a High Priest of good things to come," etc. Our Lord is here represented as the pre-eminent High Priest in three respects.

I. IN THE TEMPLE IN WHICH HE MINISTERS. 1. *The temple in which he ministers is itself pre-eminent.* He has "entered in once for all into the holy place." He ministers in the true holy of holies, of which the Jewish one was only a figure. He is not in the

symbolized, but in the veritable and immediate presence of God. "A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man." "Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us." 2. *The access to this temple is pre-eminent.* The Jewish high priest entered the holy of holies through the holy place. Our Lord passed into the true holy of holies "through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands." It seems to us that "the greater and more perfect tabernacle" cannot mean either (1) our Lord's human body or his human nature; or (2) his holy life, "his perfect inward fulfilment of the Law;" or (3) his glorified body; or (4) the Church on earth. No interpretation of this part of our text is without its difficulties; but that which seems to us to be the true one is, that he passed through the visible heavens as through an outer sanctuary into the inner sanctuary of "heaven itself." Our "great High Priest hath passed through the heavens" (ch. iv. 14), and "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." The outer sanctuary of the Jewish temple was "made with hands," small and imperfect; but the heavens which Christ passed through were created by the Divine fiat, and they are immeasurably vast and unspeakably glorious.

II. IN THE ATONEMENT WHICH HE MADE. "Nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, he entered in once for all into the holy place." The entering in through blood refers to the blood which the high priests took into the holy of holies to "make an atonement" (cf. Lev. xvi. 14—16). Christ is represented as entering the heavenly sanctuary through blood. Not literally, but figuratively, must we accept this. He complied with the condition of entrance into the perfect sanctuary as our great High Priest. He made atonement for sin previous to his appearing "before the face of God for us." But, unlike the Aaronic high priests, he needed not to make atonement for himself. For us and for all men he made the pre-eminent atonement—the perfect atonement. How? 1. *By the sacrifice of the highest life.* Not animal, but human life. Not a sinful or imperfect human life, but a pure, holy, perfect one. He gave his own life—the undefiled, the highest, the sublimest, the supremely beautiful life—as an atonement for the sin of the world. 2. *By the voluntary sacrifice of the highest life.* Christ did not die as an unwilling Victim. He freely gave himself for us. "I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me," etc. (John x. 17, 18). "Through his own blood," which was willingly shed for us, he effected human redemption, and then ascended to his mediatorial throne.

III. IN THE BLESSINGS WHICH HE OBTAINED FOR MAN. 1. *He has obtained eternal redemption for us.* Man was in bondage. Wicked powers had enslaved him. He was the thrall of corrupt passions and sinful habits; "sold under sin;" "the slave of sin;" the "bond-servant of corruption." Christ redeemed man from this bondage. He paid our ransom-price. "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, with silver or gold; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ." He is the great Emancipator. He "proclaims liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to the bound." He delivers from the condemnation, from the guilt, from the defilement, and from the sovereignty of sin. "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." And this redemption is eternal. Its benefits endure for ever. It introduces man into everlasting liberty and light, and starts him upon a career of endless progress and blessedness. 2. *He is "a High Priest of the good things to come."* These good things are the blessings of the gospel age, the privileges which Christians now enjoy. Under the former covenant they were in the future; now they are a present possession. They who lived during that dispensation had the figures of gospel blessings; we have the very blessings themselves. But there is more than that here. Christ is a High Priest of good things yet to come. There are blessings which we hope for in the future, and shall obtain through his glorious priesthood. We look forward to the time when we shall enter upon "the inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled," etc. (1 Pet. i. 4, 5). The blessings which flow to man from his priesthood are inexhaustible and infinite. Through him there will ever be "good things to come" for those who by faith are interested in his gracious and blessed mediation.—W. J.

Vers. 13, 14.—*Ceremonial and spiritual cleansing.* "For if the blood of bulls and of goats," etc.

I. THE HUMAN NEED OF CLEANSING. By implication our text teaches the moral defilement of man. Both under the Mosaic and under the Christian dispensation the impurity was moral. But in the earlier dispensation the external and ceremonial uncleanness was made most conspicuous. A very small thing led to this defilement. If a man unwittingly walked over a grave, or touched a dead human body, he was accounted unclean seven days (cf. Numb. xix. 11-22). This was designed as a parable of spiritual uncleanness. It was intended to lead men to feel the contamination of sin. So in the Christian economy it is the internal and moral impurity that is exhibited, and the need of spiritual cleansing that is insisted upon. Sin is the corrupting, defiling, separating thing. The great need is a clean heart and a right spirit.

II. THE DIVINE METHODS OF CLEANSING. Our text brings before us two methods, that of the Mosaic economy and that of the Christian, the ceremonial and the spiritual. (1) Both were of Divine origin. (2) Both involved sacrifice as an essential element. But in other respects these methods were widely different. Let us notice the method: 1. *In the earlier dispensation.* (1) *The sacrifices were of animal life.* "The blood of goats and of bulls, and the ashes of a heifer." (2) *The application of the sacrifices was external or corporeal.* The use of the blood of goats and bulls was external and visible (Lev. xvi.). The use of the ashes of the red heifer was external and corporeal (Numb. xix.). Both the sacrifices themselves and the application of them came within the region of the senses. 2. *In the Christian dispensation.* (1) *As to the sacrifice.* (a) It was the sacrifice of a human life. "The blood of Christ, who . . . offered himself." (b) It was the sacrifice of a holy human life. "Christ offered himself without blemish unto God" (cf. ch. vii. 26, 27; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19). (c) It was the sacrifice of the holy human life of a Divine Person. "The blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God." By "the eternal Spirit" we understand, "not the Spirit of the Father dwelling in Christ, nor the Holy Spirit given without measure to Christ, but the Divine Spirit of the Godhead which Christ himself had, and was in his inner personality" (Alford, *in loco*). Our Lord's Divine nature acquiesced in the redemptive plan and purpose, and contributed to its fulfilment. "It was 'the blood of Christ;' of the whole and undivided Christ," as Richard Watson observes, "who was both God and man. For though a Divine nature could not bleed and die, a Divine person could. This distinction is to be kept in mind: for, the person being one, the acts and sufferings of each nature are the acts and sufferings of the same person, and are spoken of interchangeably." "His blood, though not the blood of God, yet was the blood of him that was God." The chief value of our Saviour's sacrifice was not in the physical life which was offered, although that was perfect, but in the spirit in which it was offered. He shed his blood for us in the spirit of uttermost and perfect obedience to the Divine Father, and of willing sacrifice for the accomplishment of human salvation. And this spirit of obedience and self-sacrificing love was eternal; not a transient mood or a temporary feeling, but his eternal disposition. "The sacrifice of Christ," says Ebrard, "could only be offered in the power of eternal spirit. Only the eternal spirit of absolute love, holiness, wisdom, and compassion was capable of enduring that sacrificial death." (2) *The application of this sacrifice is spiritual.* Its efficacy can be realized only by faith. Not literally has the Christ carried his blood into the true holy of holies. Not literally is it sprinkled upon the consciences of men for their purification. The redemptive power of the death of Christ is a spiritual force, and must be spiritually appropriated. We realize it by the exercise of faith in him (Rom. iii. 24-26).

III. THE EFFICACY OF THESE METHODS OF CLEANSING. 1. *The sacrifices of the Jewish ritual were efficacious in producing ritualistic purity.* Doubtless there were persons who, regarding these sacrifices as types of a far higher sacrifice, and these cleansings as figures of a spiritual cleansing, derived spiritual and saving benefits through them. To these benefits the text does not refer, but to the national and ceremonial use of these institutions. They "sanctified unto the cleanness of the flesh." By means of them ceremonial impurity was removed, the separation consequent upon that impurity was brought to an end, and the cleansed person was restored to the congregation of Israel. 2. *The sacrifice of Christ is far more efficacious in producing spiritual purity.* "How much more shall the blood of Christ cleanse your conscience?" etc. By "conscience" in this place we do not understand any one faculty of our spiritual nature, but our entire moral consciousness in relation to God, our religious

soul. "Dead works" are those which are regarded as meritorious in themselves, and apart from the disposition and motive which prompted them. They do not proceed from a heart alive by faith and love. No living spiritual sentiment breathes through them. And their influence on the soul is not inspiring, but depressing. They have no fitness for quickening spiritual affections and powers, but for crushing and killing them. They, moreover, tend to defile man's religious nature. As the touching of a corpse, or the bone of a dead body, or treading upon a grave, defiled a man under the Mosiac Law, so the contact of these dead works with man's soul contaminates it. The moral influence of the blood of Christ cleanses away this contamination (cf. 1 John i. 8—9). The holy and infinite love of God manifested in the death of Christ for us, when it is realized by us, burns up base passions and impure human affections and unholy desires. It acts within us as a fervent and purifying fire. And it inspires the soul for true spiritual service. It "cleanses the conscience from dead works to serve the living God." The word used to express this service indicates its religiousness. It "denotes in the New Testament the priestly consecration and offering up of the whole man to the service of God, . . . the willing priestly offering of one's self to God." It does not signify service which is limited to religious duties, but the performance of every duty and all duties in a religious spirit. The whole life is consecrated to the living God, and all its occupations become exalted into a Divine service (cf. 1 Cor. x. 31; Col. iii. 17). "How much more," then, "shall the blood of Christ?" etc. In the ceremonial cleansings the connection between the means and the end was merely symbolical and arbitrary; but in the redemptive influences of the gospel there is a beautiful and sublime fitness for the accomplishment of their end. The infinite righteousness and love manifested in the great self-sacrifice of the Saviour are eminently adapted to redeem and purify man's soul from sin, and to inspire and invigorate him for the willing service of the living God. Our text corrects two errors concerning the sacrifice of Christ. 1. *It corrects the error of those who make the essence of that sacrifice to consist in the physical sufferings and death of our Lord.* God has no delight in mere pain, or blood-shedding, or death. In themselves these things cannot be pleasing to God. It was the spirit in which Christ suffered and died that made his death a Divine sacrifice and a mighty power of spiritual redemption. 2. *It corrects the error of those who depreciate the expression of the Divine spirit of self-sacrifice in the life and death of our Lord.* It was morally necessary that he should give himself as a sacrifice for us, in order that the mighty influence of the Divine righteousness and love might be brought to bear upon us and redeem us. "Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things?" "Thus it behoved the Christ to suffer," etc. (Luke xxiv. 26, 46, 47).—W. J.

Ver. 22.—*Forgiveness through sacrifice.* "Without shedding of blood is no remission." This is as true in Christianity as it was in Judaism. The text suggests—

I. A SAD FACT. Implied in the text and in the whole of the present section of the Epistle is the sad fact that men are sinners, needing forgiveness of sin and cleansing of soul. Men endeavour by various methods to get rid of this fact of sin. Some attribute what the Bible calls sin to defective social arrangements. Men, say they, are parts of a very imperfect and faulty organization, and their errors are to be charged against the organization, not against the individuals composing it. Others denominate sin "misdirection" or mistake, thus eliminating the element of will and moral responsibility. Others speak of it as "imperfect development." Others charge all personal wrongdoing upon the force of temptation, or the pressure of circumstances, ignoring the fact that solicitation is not compulsion. With these theories, how are we to account for the self-reproaches which men heap upon themselves after wrong-doing—for the fact that men do blame themselves for wrong-doing? We feel that we have sinned, that we are morally free and responsible individually, that we have broken a holy law, that we deserve punishment. The penitent heart cries, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned," etc.; "God be merciful to me the sinner." It is a terrible fact that sin is in the world, that we individually are sinners.

II. A GREAT WANT. Remission of sins—forgiveness. Man everywhere is consciously guilty before God; everywhere his heart cries out for reconciliation with him, and forgiveness from him. Altars, sacrifices, pilgrimages, penances, all witness to this. Evidences of this deep need are in our personal experience. The guilt, the consciousness

that we have offended God, the dread of the stroke of his just wrath, the aching want of his forgiveness,—these things we have felt. Who shall roll away the burden of our guilt? Who will give us peace? etc. Oh, very deep is this need, and wide as the world!

III. A DIVINE CONDITION. "Apart from shedding of blood there is no remission." Under the Mosaic economy atonement for sin was made and ceremonial cleansing obtained by the shedding and the sprinkling of blood. And the text teaches that forgiveness of sin is attainable, but only through the shedding of blood. What is the reason for this condition? The sacred Scriptures assert that "the blood is the life" (Deut. xii. 23). "The life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev. xvii. 11). Now, life is our most precious possession. "All that a man hath will he give for his life." Thus the "shedding of blood" is equivalent to the giving of the life. And to say that we are "redeemed by the precious blood of Christ" is to express the truth that we are redeemed by the sacrifice of his pure and precious and perfect life. But why should forgiveness of sin rest upon this condition of sacrifice? How the atonement of the death of Christ is related to the Divine Being and government we know not. But in relation to man and the forgiveness of sin we may without presumption offer one or two observations. Forgiveness cannot be granted at the sacrifice of law and moral order. "The Law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Man must be brought to recognize this, or to pardon him would be to license wrong-doing. A forgiveness which did not respect and honour the law and order of God would sap the foundations of his government, blight his universe, and prove an injury to man himself. How shall the Law be maintained and honoured and man be forgiven? God has supplied the answer. He gave his only begotten Son to shed his blood and give up his life for us sinners, as a grand declaration that Law is holy and righteous and good, and must be maintained, and that the Lawgiver is the righteous and loving Father, who is willing to forgive all men who turn from sin and trust the Saviour. Through the death of Christ God proclaims the wickedness of sin, the goodness, beauty, and majesty of Law, and his own infinite righteousness and love. "Apart from shedding of blood there is no remission." This is not an arbitrarily imposed condition of forgiveness of sin. The necessities of the case demand it. It is gracious on the part of God so clearly to declare it. And he who declares it has himself provided for its fulfilment. "Herein is love," etc. (1 John iv. 9, 10); "God commendeth his own love toward us," etc. (Rom. v. 8). "Forgiveness of sin through the shedding of blood, the salvation of the sinner through the sacrifice of the Saviour, is the Divine and the only true method. The atonement of the cross is a comprehensive force in the actual redemption of the world from evil."

IV. A GLORIOUS FACT. Forgiveness is attainable unto all men. The blood has been shed, Jesus the Christ has offered up his most precious life as a sacrifice for sin, the Divine condition of forgiveness is fulfilled, and forgiveness is now within the reach of every man. It is freely offered to all men, and upon conditions which render it available unto every man. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts," etc. (Isa. lv. 6, 7). "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "If we confess our sins," etc. (1 John i. 9).

CONCLUSION. 1. *There is no forgiveness for us apart from Jesus Christ.* Our works cannot merit it. Presumptuous trust in the mercy of God, as though he were regardless of law and order, will not meet with it. Future obedience as an atonement for past sins cannot secure it. Apart from Christ we cannot obtain it. 2. *Accept heartily the forgiveness which is offered to us through him.*—W. J.

Ver. 24.—"*Heaven itself.*" "For Christ entered . . . into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Our text teaches—

I. THAT HEAVEN ITSELF IS A LOCALITY. It is spoken of here as a place into which Christ entered. In his glorified body he entered there, and we cannot conceive of the existence of a body apart from space and place. Body cannot exist apart from place. Our Lord said to his disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you." Doubtless the blessedness of heaven is chiefly a thing of moral condition, not of circumstances; of character, not of locality. If a person's soul be impure, sinful, and possessed by

wicked passions, no place could afford him joy. To such a one "heaven itself" would be a place of intolerable misery. Heaven as a state is in the holy soul; but there is also heaven as a place in which the holy dwell. We know not where this place is. We know it is not in the visible, stellar heavens; for Christ passed through them (ch. iv. 14) into heaven itself. But where it is situated we know not. We know not its aspects or the character of its scenery. But we are convinced that it must be supremely beautiful. There are scenes of exquisite beauty and glorious grandeur and awful sublimity in this world. And we cannot but believe that in this respect heaven will, at least, be not less beautiful, or grand, or sublime. Rather, does not every consideration encourage the belief that it will present scenes that for beauty and sublimity, grandeur and glory, will immeasurably surpass everything that we know at present?

II. THAT HEAVEN ITSELF IS THE SCENE OF THE SUPREME MANIFESTATION OF GOD. "The presence of God" is manifested there. "The face of God" is seen there. Moses said unto Jehovah, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory;" and he was answered, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. . . . Thou shalt see my back parts; but my face shall not be seen" (Exod. xxxiii. 18—23). It must, we conceive, in one sense remain for ever true that no man shall see the unveiled face of God, and live. "Whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (1 Tim. vi. 16). But it is also true that in the future there will be granted unto his people a spiritual vision of God of much greater clearness and fulness than any which they have in this present state. Their "future life will be spent in God's presence, in a sense which does not apply to our present life." For this the intensely religious soul of David yearned. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness," etc. (Ps. xvii. 15). With ardent desire St. Paul anticipated that he should see him "face to face" (1 Cor. xiii. 12). And St. John was thrilled with the sublime and sanctifying hope that he should "see him as he is" (1 John iii. 2). At present we see him through his works. Creation is a revelation of his might and majesty, his wisdom and goodness. But a nearer and clearer vision of him awaits us in the future. In that future our perceptions will doubtless be more quick and true, more comprehensive and strong, than they are at present. Here and now some men discern signs of the Divine presence and catch sounds of the Divine voice, where others recognize nothing Divine.

"Cleon sees no charms in nature—in a daisy, I;
Cleon hears no anthem ringing in the sea and sky:
Nature sings to me for ever—earnest listener, I."

But the perceptions of even the spiritual and thoughtful man here are dim to what they will be hereafter. Then we shall see him, not through the veil of flesh, not through the clouds which our doubts and sins interpose between us and him, but with the clarified vision of the pure heart (Matt. v. 8). This vision is promised unto his servants. "His servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face" (Rev. xxii. 3, 4; see also Rev. vii. 15; xxi. 3). This vision of God is: 1. *Enrapturing*. "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." 2. *Transforming*. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, after forty days' communion with God, "the skin of his face shone." He had caught something of the glory of the august and awful Being with whom he had been in communication. How much more will the saints in heaven receive of his glory! For (1) Moses saw only his "back parts," but "they shall see his face." (2) Moses saw him and caught of his glory in his fleshly and mortal body, but they shall see him in their spiritual and immortal bodies. (3) Moses was with him but for forty days, but they shall be with him for ever. For this vision is: 3. *Abiding*. In heaven itself the manifestation of God will not be occasional or intermittent, but regular and constant. "He will dwell with them," etc. (Rev. xxi. 3).

III. THAT HEAVEN ITSELF IS THE ABODE OF THE CHRIST AND THE SCENE OF HIS PRESENT MINISTRY. "Christ entered into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us." He is there in his mediatorial glory (ch. i. 3; viii. 1). 1. *He is there as the Representative of man*. The expression, "to appear in the presence of God for us," suggests that he is in heaven as our Representative or Advocate (cf. ch. vii. 25; Rom. viii. 34). As the Aaronic high priest, on the great Day of Atonement, went into the

holy of holies as the representative of the people; so our Saviour, "when he had made purification of sins," "entered into heaven itself," etc. 2. *He is there continuously as the Representative of man.* The meaning of the "now" is, "from the point of time when he entered heaven as our High Priest, onward indefinitely." It implies the continuance of his appearance before the face of God for us. 3. *He is there as the Forerunner of man.* (Cf. ch. vi. 20; John xiv. 2, 3.)

CONCLUSION. Let us seek for heaven in the soul, or we can never be admitted into heaven itself. "Blessed are the pure in heart," etc. (Matt. v. 8). "Follow after holiness," etc. (ch. xii. 14).—W. J.

Vers. 27, 28.—*The two deaths, and the two appearances after death.* "And as it is appointed unto men once to die," etc. The writer is still treating of the completeness of the sacrifice of our Saviour. That sacrifice was offered once for all. Being perfect, it needed no repetition. And now he shows that its repetition was impossible. Notice—

I. THE TWO DEATHS. The death of man, and the death of the Christ. They are mentioned together here to bring out the fact that Christ's offering of himself will not be repeated. Notice these two deaths in the order in which they are here mentioned. 1. *The death of man.* (1) *The event itself.* Seneca asks, "What is death, but a ceasing to be what we were before? We were kindled and put out; we die daily." "The cessation of the vital activities is death, which is simply another name for discontinuance," says Grindon. And Longfellow, "'Tis the cessation of our breath." It is dissolution, the separation of the soul and body. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was," etc. (Eccles. xii. 7). It leads to great and momentous changes in the mode and conditions of our life. (2) *The certainty of the event.* "It is appointed unto men," etc. It is the lot assigned to us by the great Sovereign of being. God, says Gurnall, "to prevent all escape, hath sown the seeds of death in our very constitution and nature, so that we can as soon run from ourselves as run from death. We need no feller to come with a hand of violence and hew us down; there is in the tree a worm, which grows out of its own substance, that will destroy it; so in us, those infirmities of nature that will bring us down to the dust." "No man hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit," etc. (Eccles. viii. 8; cf. Ps. xlix. 6—10). (3) *The solitariness of the event.* "It is appointed unto men once to die." This death occurs but once. It is an event which can never be repeated. In this fact we have a reason why we should prepare for it. Many actions are done often in a lifetime, and if their earliest performance be not satisfactory, we may do them better afterwards. Some of our experiences occur often, and if at first we were not prepared for them, and passed through them without advantage, or with disadvantage, we may prepare for their recurrence, and then pass through them with decided benefit. But death is an experience which never recurs; let us, then, prepare for it. It is a journey which we shall travel only once—"the way whence we shall not return;" therefore let us be in readiness for it. 2. *The death of the Christ.* "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." (1) *He died as a Sacrifice for sin.* "Offered to bear the sins." He bore our sins in his feeling. In his heart he had such a deep sense of the wickedness of human sin as was possible only to a Being of perfect holiness. He mourned over sin with deepest sorrow; he condemned it as utterly wicked; and he sought to deliver men from it. He also bore our sins in his sufferings and in his death upon the cross. Here he was offered to bear the sins of many. "His own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, . . . by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Pet. ii. 24). "He was wounded for our transgressions," etc. (Isa. liii. 5, 6, 12). (2) *He died as a Sacrifice for the sins of all men.* "To bear the sins of many." The "many" signifies men in general; all men, as in ch. ii. 9: "By the grace of God he should taste death for every man." So also teaches St. Paul: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." "And he died for all." "Who gave himself a Ransom for all." So also St. John (1 John ii. 2). And our Lord himself (John iii. 15, 16; xii. 32). (3) *He died as a Sacrifice which is never to be repeated.* (a) Its repetition is impossible. As man can die only once, so the Christ can only be offered in death once. (b) Its repetition is unnecessary. His offering was perfect in itself and in its efficacy; its efficacy, moreover, is perpetual, so that it need not be repeated. Heaven asks no more. Man needs no more.

"His precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till the whole ransomed Church of God
Be saved, to sin no more."

(Cowper.)

II. THE TWO APPEARINGS AFTER DEATH. 1. *The appearing of man after death.* "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this, judgment," etc. (2 Cor. v. 10). The fact of human responsibility to God suggests the coming of a great day of account. The Divine government of the world, and the inequalities between the characters and conditions and circumstances of men, which are so many and remarkable at present, point to the necessity of such a day. The holy Bible declares it as a certainty (cf. Eccles. xii. 14; Matt. xxv. 31—46; Acts xvii. 31; Rom. xiv. 10—12). How unutterably solemn the consideration that all the myriads of the dead shall appear again in the great day, and before the awful and holy tribunal of the Son of God and Son of man! 2. *The appearing of the Christ after death.* "The Christ, also, having been offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time," etc. (1) *He will appear again.* "The Christ shall appear a second time." "This Jesus, which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner," etc. (Acts i. 11). He promised his disciples, "I will come again," etc. (John xiv. 3; and cf. Matt. xvi. 27; xxiv. 30; 1 Thess. i. 10; iv. 16; 2 Thess. i. 10; Rev. i. 7). (2) *He will appear again "apart from sin."* His first coming was distinctly related to sin. "Him who knew no sin, God made to be sin on our behalf" (2 Cor. v. 21). That relation and character is completed, fulfilled. "Having been once offered to bear the sin of many," his personal connection with it is ended. He has done with it. His next coming will be apart from sin, and in great glory. "The Son of man shall come in his glory," etc. (Matt. xxv. 31). "Looking for the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." (3) *He will appear to perfect the salvation of his people.* "Unto salvation." Here are two points: (a) The attitude of his people in relation to his coming. "Them that wait for him." This implies: (a) *Faith* in his coming. "We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," etc. (Phil. iii. 20, 21). (b) *Desire* for his coming. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." (c) *Expectation* of his coming. They "wait for God's Son from heaven," etc. (1 Thess. i. 10). (d) The object of his coming in relation to his people. "Unto salvation." To perfect their salvation. He will raise their bodies, reunite body and soul, receive them into his glory. He will say unto them, "Come, ye blessed of my Father," etc. They shall enter into the joy of their Lord. "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things," etc. (2 Pet. iii. 14).—W. J.

Vers. 1—5.—*Passing reference to the symbolism of the Jewish tabernacle.* The third deduction from the fact that Christ, infinitely greater than Aaron, is High Priest at the right hand of God: *The abolition of the Jewish types by their fulfilment in the Redeemer.* This occupies ch. ix.—x. 18. Subject—*Passing reference to the symbolism of the Jewish tabernacle.* The importance of the tabernacle is obvious, since thirty-seven chapters are devoted to describe it and its services, and seven times it is said to have been made according to the heavenly pattern; so much so that when the writer of this Epistle has to refer to what was typical in the old economy, he does not speak of the temple, but of the original sanctuary. Moreover, but for the tabernacle and its services, much of what is most important in the New Testament would be unintelligible—the veil, mercy-seat, priest, atonement, Lamb of God, etc. The tabernacle standing in its sacred enclosure in the midst of the vast encampment, with the cloudy pillar resting upon it, was the dwelling-place of Israel's King. At Sinai God and Israel entered into solemn covenant. He was to be their King, and they a people peculiarly his own, and from that time he made his visible abode among them. But what was the purpose of the particular form this abode assumed? They were ignorant of him, and in so low a condition that abstract truth was insufficient for their teaching; they needed heavenly things in pictures. The tabernacle, therefore, was doubtless designed in its construction to meet this need. It would convey to them very plainly that God is real, one, theirs, holy, only approachable to man by sacrifice. But the New Testament throws

additional light on this ancient sanctuary, by which its details are seen to be profoundly symbolic of New Testament truth, and Christians may better understand, because of it, their position in Christ. *The Jewish tabernacle is the type of the Christian Church* (1 Cor. iii. 16, 17; 2 Cor. vi. 16; Eph. ii. 20—22). The Church, founded on "the atonement money" (Scripture name for the hundred silver sockets which were the foundation of the tabernacle); the Church, habitation of God through the Spirit; the Church, witness to the world of the reality, character, and grace of God.

I. THE SYMBOLISM IN THE JEWISH TABERNACLE. The tabernacle consisted of two apartments separated by the veil, the inner one called "the holy of holies." 1. *The relation of Jehovah to the Church, as seen in the holy of holies.* Described in vers. 3—5. A symbol of heaven, as in Apocalypse: "The city lieth four square, and the length," etc.; "And the city had no need of the sun, for the," etc. Most glorious place, seat and throne of the King, where celestial beings bow in his presence! Most holy place, hidden from human gaze, inaccessible save through the atonement, inaccessible yet so near; only a veil between, which a breath might almost waft aside, and which the incense of prayer can penetrate! Most blessed place, for there our great High Priest ever carries on his work on our behalf! How well is the tabernacle a type of this! There was the ark of the covenant, and nothing more, save that the walls and ceiling were draped with curtains embroidered with cherubic figures: What did this typify? That (1) *God's dealings with his people are based on Law.* The tables of stone, "tables of the covenant," were the essential contents of the ark (the pot of manna and the rod were not there originally, nor were they found there when the ark was placed in the temple). God's relation to man is that of Sovereign; from his throne issue the commands concerning what man should be and do; and at his feet lie ever the requirements he makes of man. (2) *Provision has been made for covering over the broken Law from the sight of the King.* The mercy-seat on the ark, the golden alab on which was sprinkled the sacrificial blood on the Day of Atonement. "Mercy-seat;" literally, "an expiatory covering." Looking down on his Law, the King sees the Sacrifice, and where he used to hear a testimony of guilt, he now hears a plea for mercy. (3) *The result of this provision is the perfection of his people in his presence.* The cherubim bowing before his glory with no fear but that of reverence. The cherubim set forth the highest creature perfection—head of man, body of lion, wings of eagle, feet of ox; representing perfect intelligence, strength, flight, obedience; picture of man perfected, fallen humanity in its restored condition, eternal fellowship with God with completed powers. "We have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" that is the broken Law. "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;" that is the mercy-seat. "Whom he justified, them he also glorified;" that is the cherubim. 2. *The relation of the Church to Jehovah, as seen in the holy place.* (Ver. 2.) The golden altar, candlestick, shewbread-table, occupied this apartment. (Note, no mention of the golden altar in the text, but in the fourth verse the word "censer" signifies anything that holds incense, and probably should be rendered "altar," as we read of no censer belonging to the holy of holies. It is not said in ver. 4 that this was within the holy of holies, but only that it belonged to it; it stood close to the veil, its incense passed through the veil, its work was within whilst its form was without.) These are also part of the type of the Church; the Church below, as the former the Church above. What do they teach about the Church on earth? Righteous mercy raising us to perfection with him. That is God's part of the covenant. What is ours? (1) *The altar, that is, the worship of the Church.* Incense in Scripture a type of prayer. The altar sprinkled with atoning blood before incense could be offered; the incense rekindled daily by the holy fire; the fragrant odour passing to the mercy-seat, a sacrifice acceptable. What a type of prayer smouldering in the heart all through the day, kindled morning and evening, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ! (2) *The candlestick, that is, the work of the Church.* "Ye are the light of the world." It is the world's night. God lights his lamps, that thereby the world may see what it would see of spiritual realities if it were not night. "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord." (3) *The shewbread, that is, the consecration of the Church.* Bread represents life. These twelve loaves, one for each tribe, set forth the Divine demand for the dedication to him of all his people. He redeems us that we may be his. "For to this end Christ both died, and rose," etc. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father;" that is the altar. "Ye were sometime

darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; that is the candlestick. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye," etc.; that is the shewbread.

II. THE CHRISTIAN LESSONS IN THE SYMBOLISM. 1. *That the Church is the dwelling-place of God.* The symbolism is abolished; what is left? The Christian Church, the spiritual temple, which is to be in the world what the tabernacle was in Israel. As once God dwelt in a consecrated temple, now he dwells in consecrated lives; no more worshipped by sacred forms, but by devout hearts. Symbolism has given place to spirituality. 2. *That the true Church is that which embodies the teaching of the holy and most holy places.* Or, in other words, the true *Christian*. You believe in what is done for you within the veil, the Godward aspect of Christian life; but to that do you add the manward—worship, service, consecration? 3. *That the way into the Church is symbolized in the types of the old sanctuary.* Between the entrance to the tabernacle and the gate of the court, stood the brazen altar on which the sacrifices were offered, and the brazen laver. No entrance to the Church but by Christ's work and the Spirit's—the atoning blood and the laver of regeneration.—O. N.

Vers. 6—10.—*The symbolism of the Jewish sacrifices.* Only a partial reference, but enough to call up to the Hebrew mind the round of sacred offerings prescribed in Leviticus.

I. PRELIMINARY INQUIRIES AS TO SACRIFICE IN GENERAL. 1. *What was the origin of the sacrificial act?* Did it originate with man or God? In favour of the former, there is the fact that it is not recorded that the first sacrifice was the result of a Divine call. But against this, we are told that the first recorded sacrifice was offered "by faith" (Heb. xi. 4), and faith implies a Divine revelation—"faith cometh by hearing, and hearing," etc. The Divine origin of the act is, therefore, implied. Moreover, the act of religious sacrifice is practically universal. Does not that imply a principle wrought into human nature by its Creator, especially when it is remembered that the act is one repugnant to human feeling? But, more than all, God's covenant with men is based on sacrifice, and it is surely incredible that Jehovah adopted for so supreme an end what man had first suggested. 2. *What was the meaning the Jew attached to sacrificial rites?* Whatever shades of meaning attached to different offerings, and however much or little spiritual significance to any of them, it must, at least, have been impressed on the Hebrew mind with great clearness that "without the shedding of blood there was no remission of sins," that God's people only remained in covenant with him through the efficacy of a substitutionary victim. That was the basis of the Jewish system, and was before the people in various forms every day, and could hardly be missed. How far the average Jew regarded these as types of a perfect sacrifice to be made hereafter, or how far he trusted in them, cannot be said; but at least the pious amongst them understood that unless the physical act had a spiritual antitype it was unacceptable (Ps. xl. 6—8; 1. 7—15; Isa. i. 11—15; liii.; Jer. vii. 21—23; Hos. vi. 6; Micah vi. 7—8). 3. *What are the particular truths symbolized in the various sacrifices?* The offerings (except those which applied to special and personal matters) were of five kinds—sin, trespass, burnt, meat, and peace offerings. It must be remembered that these were the offerings of those living under the privileges of the Day of Atonement; in other words, of a people already in covenant with Jehovah. The Day of Atonement was the one day on which expiation was made for all sin, and Jehovah showed himself still their God. That day was unique, and was to the nation what that day is to the believer when, on his first faith in Christ, he is admitted into God's family. By the services of that day the people stood justified before God, in covenant relation with him. No doubt the sum of the five offerings is the Lord Jesus. He is essentially the *Sacrifice* in whom all these typical sacrifices are gathered up, and they are so many different aspects of his work. But beside this, and growing out of it, they have reference to different aspects of the worshipper's position. On the Day of Atonement the sacrifices were offered for the people. The high priest did it all; but in these other offerings the people appear as actors, and there is a sense in which these were not made for them, but by them. The penitent sinner has only to receive; that is the Day of Atonement. The redeemed saint has to give; that is represented by these five offerings. *The sacrifices, therefore, set forth different aspects of Christ's work, revealing different aspects of the saint's position.*

II. WITH THIS IDEA OF THE MEANING OF THE SACRIFICES, GLANCE AT THEM SEPARATELY. When a complete round of sacrificial offerings was required, they were generally made in a specified order: sin, or trespass, or occasionally both; burnt; meat; peace. We may divide these into three groups. 1. *Sin and trespass offerings setting forth the worshipper's need of expiation.* The prominent idea in both these is expiation. Israel stood before God in a state of reconciliation, yet needing constant pardon for offences committed in that state. These offerings were to meet that need. "He that is cleansed needeth not save to," etc.; but he needs that. In the law of these offerings (Lev. iv. and v.) we have sin confessed, judged, requiring blood-shedding, atoned for, and pardoned. The peculiarity of the trespass offering was that it was for sins which admitted of some sort of restitution. The teaching of these offerings is that for the Christian's sins there is pardon through the blood of the Lamb, but the condition of which is penitence which tries to undo the wrong done. "I lay my sins on Jesus," etc.; that is the sin offering. "Lord, if I have wronged any man, I restore unto him fourfold;" that is the trespass offering. Where these are combined "it shall be forgiven him" (Lev. iv.). 2. *Burnt and meat offerings expressing the worshipper's desire for dedication.* These are classed together in Scripture (Numb. xv. 3, 4), and, unlike the former, they were both "sweet savour offerings unto the Lord." The law of the burnt offering is in Lev. i. This was the perpetual offering of God's covenant people, being offered every morning and evening. Every sabbath, every month, and at all the annual festivals, and indeed all through the night, when the altar was required for no other use, this sacrifice was slowly consuming. The idea of sin needing expiation was here, but was not the prominent one. This could hardly refer to less than that *perpetual self-dedication which is the natural result of acceptance by God.* (Heads, legs, and inwards all burnt—thoughts, walk, affections.) With this was joined the meat offering. "Meat," equivalent to "food." Man's food is symbolic of man's life. Here we have the burnt offering over again, but with this addition—*part of it was bestowed on the priest.* See here the Christian law of dedication—a whole life given to God, but in being given to him given to his people. Christ was both Burnt Offering and Meat Offering. "I beseech you . . . present yourselves," etc.; that is the burnt offering. "To do good and to communicate," etc.; that is the meat offering. 3. *The peace offering representing the worshipper's enjoyment of fellowship.* (Lev. iii.) Its peculiarity is that it was divided into three parts; one burnt as God's portion, one given to priests, and one retained by the offerer, who might invite his friends to partake of it. The idea of unworthiness was represented with the imposition of hands and sprinkled blood; but the great idea was that, notwithstanding unworthiness, peace with God was realized, verified, enjoyed in fellowship. It was the token that the offerer was admitted to a standing in God's house, a seat at his table, communion and friendship. How much is involved when a man can eat together with God and his family! This is fulfilled in Christ; in him God and man find common food; and when we partake of him we are drawn into closest nearness to the Father. This is the peace offering—"Truly our fellowship is with the Father." Expiation, dedication, fellowship, complete Christian life.

III. SUM UP ALL THIS IN THREE PRACTICAL WORDS. 1. *The privileges here symbolized are to be fulfilled by the Christian Church.* "See here," says God to us, "the blessings you believers may enjoy!" Do we enjoy them? Unless we do we are no better for living under the Christian dispensation, and the Jew was as rich as we. 2. *These privileges were only possible at the sacrificial altar.* All five offerings were made at the brazen altar used on the Day of Atonement. All our Christian privileges flow from the cross of Christ, and can only be fulfilled as we fulfil them there. 3. *These privileges only belong to those for whom the Day of Atonement avails.* Only for them—but for them. If we cannot offer the unpardoned sinner these, we can offer him a share in the great essential preceding atoning work.—C. N.

Vers. 6—13.—*The Day of Atonement fulfilled, and its imperfect blessings perfected in Christ.* In dealing with the abolition of the types of the old economy since their fulfilment in the high priesthood of Christ (ch. ix.—x. 18), the writer comes here to dwell on the Jewish Day of Atonement. That day is the key to these and following verses, and the most forcible illustration of our Lord's high priestly work. This day was at the basis of the Jewish system; by its services, Israel's covenant relation to

Jehovah was re-established and affirmed. The other offerings of the year were dependent on this, representing the various spiritual privileges of those who are at peace with the Most High. On that day, not only was atonement made for the people, but also for the priesthood, and the altar on which the other sacrifices were offered, and the tabernacle and its furniture, implying that the privileges these represented were only possible through the atonement made then. Had there been no Day of Atonement it would have involved the extinction of their peculiar privileges as the chosen people. That day was to Israel what to the believer that day is when in faith he first lays his sins on Christ, and enters the number of the redeemed. Subject—*The Day of Atonement fulfilled, and its imperfect blessings perfected in Christ.*

I. THE IMPERFECTION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT TYPE. (Vers. 6-10.) It is here said that the Divine Spirit was the Author of these arrangements, that they were a representation of sacred truth, and that in every part of them we have the utterance of a thought of God—so much so that there is, probably, no fundamental doctrine of the New Testament whose striking symbol we cannot find in one or other of these ancient ordinances. Describe the Day of Atonement—the penitence which was to usher it in; the services conducted entirely by the high priest; the two sets of sacrifices, the sin and burnt offerings for himself and his house, and those for the people; the slaying the sin offering for himself, and his entrance within the veil with the blood of sprinkling; the slaying the sin offering for the people, and his second entrance within the veil, sprinkling also the furniture of the holy place as he passed out; the confession of sins over the head of the scapegoat and its being sent away into the wilderness; the putting on of his gorgeous robes and presenting the burnt offerings (dedication after expiation); the closing of the ceremony with the high priestly benediction. Now, what was the use of all this? 1. *It was perfect as a type.* It is not possible to imagine a more perfect parallel than exists between this and New Testament truth. On the sinner's side, repentance, faith, holiness; on the Saviour's side, the substitutionary offering of himself, the passing into the Father's presence to plead his sacrifice, and then "as far as the east is from the west, so far," etc. 2. *It was perfect as a means of legal and ceremonial cleansing.* God has in all ages but one means of atonement. The nation was not a nation of saved persons after the Day of Atonement; the fact that this was repeated annually showed that "it was not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin." This day "sanctified unto the purifying of the flesh" (ver. 13)—"flesh" as opposed to spirit; it removed legal and ceremonial defilement, and retained the nation in its legal standing with Jehovah. 3. *But it was imperfect for giving access to God.* "The Holy Ghost this," etc. Conscience knows that no formalism, no human works, can atone for sin and admit to the Divine favour; that when the Day of Atonement has done its best, the spirit of man is left as far from Jehovah as it was before; that the true veil remained unrent.

II. THE PERFECTION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TYPE. Vers. 11, 12, and 14 display the wonderful perfection of our Lord's sacrifice. 1. *His Divine appointment.* The various titles of the Saviour are not used at random. Here he is called Christ, the Anointed One—he who was promised by God, and for whom the ages have been looking. The substitution of another in our stead depends for its efficacy on whether God will accept him in that capacity. But God "gave his Son;" God "made him to be a Sin Offering for us;" God "hath set him forth to be a Propitiation." "My son, God will provide himself a lamb;" twenty centuries later, "Behold the Lamb of God!" 2. *His Divine nature.* "Christ, who through the eternal Spirit," etc. Does this refer to the Holy Ghost? We think not. That name is given to him nowhere else, and it is not easy to see the bearing of that idea on the argument. We take it as referring to the eternal nature of Christ, as opposed to his fleshly nature. "Made of the seed of David according to the flesh, but declared to be the Son of God according," etc.; "A Priest, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life." According to the flesh, he is Son of man; according to his eternal spirit, he is Son of God. The efficacy of his sacrifice was due to the eternal spirit of Godhead, the most extraordinary feature in his person. He who poured out his soul unto death at the world's great altar for man's sin was God himself, making the atonement his righteousness required. Hence the infinite efficacy of that atonement. 3. *His Divine sinlessness.* "Without spot." He can bear our sins because he had none of his own.

III. THE ACCOMPLISHMENT BY THE PERFECT REALITY OF WHAT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO THE IMPERFECT TYPE. (Vers. 13, 14.) (The word "serve" refers to religious ministrations, worship.) Mark the contrast: Let the silver trumpets herald in the Day of Atonement, let its inspired solemnities be all fulfilled; and, though the nation is legally, ceremonially cleansed thereby, this has not met the needs nor silenced the fears of a single contrite soul; not one of their number is spiritually nearer to God, and the most holy place is still inaccessible. Now turn to Calvary, the reality to which these types pointed, and what is the result? 1. *Our conscience is satisfied*—satisfied because it knows God is satisfied. The atonement, then, meets every requirement of the Divine Law; not even Divine righteousness could demand a greater. In it every claim of our conscience is intelligently and abundantly met. 2. *The way into the Divine presence is opened*. Sin separates between God and us; but, with a conscience satisfied that sin is put away, we can look into God's face, venture to his side, bow at his feet, confide in his welcome. The veil of the temple fell to as before, and God was still hidden from man, after the great Jewish day; but when the true atonement had been made, the veil was rent in twain, the way into the holiest was made manifest. To the question, "How much more?" the utmost thought of man can give no answer. —C. N.

Vers. 1—5.—*Symbolism of the tabernacle*. It is remarkable that in the Epistle to the Hebrews there is a constant reference to the tabernacle, while the glory of the temple is not noticed and explained. This may arise from several causes, of which the following may be named as the most probable. It was the original form of Divine worship. It had the attraction of antiquity. It was connected with the personal history of Moses and Aaron. It was unpolluted by idolatry. Here the writer mentions the nature and furniture of the tabernacle, which expressed Divine ideas alone. Moses was, to use a modern phrase, "master of the works;" but the plan was Divine, and supplied by him who sees the end from the beginning. The principal thoughts which this passage supplies are: 1. The covenant had a material or worldly tabernacle which denotes *approachableness*. The ever-blessed God placed his tent in the midst of the tents of Israel that they might come to him, and use the ordinances of Divine service for their forgiveness, peace, and intercourse with the Father of spirits. It proclaims the truth which our Lord announced to the woman of Samaria, that God seeketh men to worship him. "He is not," said Paul, "far from every one of us." This is plainly taught by the incarnation of our Lord, who is Immanuel—God with us. 2. The next thought is that of *mystery*, for God dwelt in the thick darkness, and once a year the solemn service of the high priest was performed with sacred awe. Within the second veil Jehovah dwelt, and taught men that, how gracious soever he was to come near, he must be had in reverence by all them that are round about him. 3. The appointment of the candlestick signifies *illumination for service*. It must be confessed that while there are vast and inscrutable mysteries, those things which are requisite for our salvation and growth in grace are very plainly revealed. The mystery of the inner holy place is not for us to understand; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and our children, that we may do all the words of this Law. Our Lord said to a man, probably of a serious temper, who desired to know if few were saved, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." The light of the lamp was for the service of the priest, and Scripture is given that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. 4. Then appears the thought of *spiritual supply*. The tables of shewbread were furnished every week, and the priests ate of the loaves which had stood seven days before God in his tabernacle. God blessed the provision of his house; but the arrangement foreshadowed that supply which Christ claimed to be when he called himself "the Bread of life." "My God," said Paul, "shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv. 19). 5. The pot of manna and Aaron's rod presented *memorials of Divine power*. The one reminded worshippers of that all-sufficiency which supplied the wants of myriads with daily bread, and the other was a miraculous act which terminated all disputes about the priesthood. Believers now can look up to the throne and see more illustrious proofs of power in the glory of the Redeemer, who was proved to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead, and by the sight of the number of "spirits of just men made perfect," who have come out of tribulation, and are in the

joy and felicity of heaven. 6. Then follows the *acceptableness of prayer*, which is denoted by the golden censer; and the odours represent the prayers of the saints. Prayers are pleasant to God from the sense of our need, and therefore humility of soul; our faith in his interest in us, and our desire to glorify his Name. The angel said to Cornelius, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." 7. And, lastly, this furniture signifies *mercy and adoration*. There was the mercy-seat, under which, in the most sacred place, was the Divine Law. Between the Law and God came the cover of the ark, which was sprinkled with sacrificial blood, and through faith in the arrangement sins were forgiven. This is realized in the Redeemer, who is our Propitiation; through whom we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins. Then the cherubim overshadowed the mercy-seat; for the angels desire to look into these things, and bow with reverence and love in the presence of God. The object of all revelation, all sacrifice, all the work of the Son of God, and all the sacred power of the Spirit, is to prepare believers by the experiences of earth for the adoration of heaven.—B.

Vers. 6—10.—*Symbolism of the sacrifices*. The writer declares that the past dispensation of the Law was a parable or figure. The whole of this Epistle turns upon the interpretation of this parable. Our Lord employed many parables to set forth the nature of his kingdom. He presented many aspects and features and processes of the gospel; and the meaning of these things he explained to the humble and docile spirit of his disciples. In the condition of the Jews under the Law, there was the exclusion of the people from the first tabernacle, and the exclusion of the priests from the second, or holy of holies. The high priest, once a year, entered with awe into the presence of God. There were constant repetitions of the same service which could not take away sin. There was much that was external and ceremonial, and had respect to washings—purification from the defilement that arose from touching certain objects—and there was a sharp division with reference to meats and drinks. All these things were parables, and when the times of reformation came, their object was seen, because a parable must be lifted to the higher region of the truth which it is designed to illustrate. It must be inferior to the object. Here was a sinful priest who offered his errors, and therefore we need one who was sinless and Divine. The repetition of the sacrifice suggests the need of One who by one offering should take away sin. It suggested the need of greater light, for there was a veil which hid the interior of the holy of holies. This veil was rent at the death of Christ, and heaven is now open to faith and worship.

* The smoke of thine atonement here
Darkened the sun and rent the veil,
Made the new way to heaven appear,
And showed the great Invisible:
Well pleased in thee, our God looks down,
And calls his rebels to a crown."

It leads us to consider the removal of all exclusiveness; and while formerly priest and high priest alone could minister in the tabernacle, all believers are now kings and priests unto God. It teaches us how needful was a spiritual system to displace that which had to do with the outward washing and distinctions of food; and to make us know that the kingdom of God is not in meats and drinks, but in "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."—B.

Vers. 11, 12.—*Christ's eternal priesthood*. Over against the imperfection and material character of the laws of Moses which concerned meats, drinks, and divers washings, there is here introduced the exalted nature and efficiency of the Redeemer's priesthood.

I. This appears in THE FUTURE AND ENDURING EFFECTS OF HIS SACRIFICE. All his office relates chiefly to eternity, whereas the work of the Levitical priesthood had to do with annual atonement, purity of person, and temporal blessings. Our Lord directs our thoughts and hopes to the immeasurable future in which are to be found spiritual life, holy peace, perfection of worship, and the everlasting presence of God. These blessings will always be good things to come; for with God is the Fountain of life, and in his light shall believers always see light.

II. THE EXALTED SPHERE OF HIS MINISTRY. The old tabernacle was made with hands. The genius of Aholiab and Bezaleel, the work of carpenter, spinner, and weaver, were applied to make the holy tent. It was a narrow and perishable fabric. Our Lord is now in heaven, which is not made with hands and by the assistance of men or angels. It is the direct creation of the infinite and all-sufficient power of Jehovah, where his holy angels and archangels dwell and worship. The place is suitable for the matchless dignity of the priest. The earthly tabernacle is fit for the weakness and sin of the earthly minister, but heaven with its brightness and purity is the proper tabernacle for the Son of God.

III. THE SUPERIORITY OF HIS ATONING BLOOD. The victims whose blood was shed were unconscious of any purpose in their death. There was no willingness and no sympathy with the object of the sacrifice, and there was consequently nothing more than subjection to physical force, which deprived the death of moral value. Our Lord offered himself a willing Sacrifice, and his voluntary surrender to death has imparted to his work of suffering an inconceivable value and power. He is "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." He is now in the holy place as the one, all-sufficient High Priest, whose one sacrificial act has a vital and indestructible force in the government of God and the system of Divine grace.

IV. THE FINALITY AND ISSUES OF HIS SACRIFICE. He entered once, and is therefore unlike the Jewish priest, who went in to the holiest of all year after year. It is the glory of Christ to do this thing once, and there needs no more sacrifice for sin. The redemption is not from year to year, but it has eternal issues which, beginning by faith in him, now advances in constant acts of redemption through life, by which believers are redeemed from evil in its various forms, from the penal stroke of death, and from all the effects, traces, and influences of evil for evermore.—B.

Vers. 13, 14.—*Ceremonial and spiritual purification.* There are here—

I. THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR CEREMONIAL PURIFICATION. A red heifer—the colour of red signifying the inflaming nature of sin—was to be slain by a priest; but not the high priest, who was to abstain from all contact with death. And the body and the blood were to be burnt outside the camp. Some of the blood was sprinkled towards the tabernacle, and during the process of burning, cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet wool were thrown into the fire. The ashes were laid up for use by those who had become ceremonially unclean by touching the dead, and for the purification of the house, furniture, and utensils where a death had occurred. Being mixed with water and sprinkled upon such persons and homes, on the third and seventh day the defilement was removed. This was the Divine arrangement for the purity of Israel, and those who complied with the will of God enjoyed liberty of approach to his courts, and a share in the blessings of the tabernacle and priesthood.

II. THE SUPERIOR GLORY AND EFFECT OF THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST. The writer had previously noticed the inferior nature and limited effect of animal sacrifices; and here he rises from the blood of slain beasts, and the bodily cleansing they secured, to the Divine nature of our Lord, which gives an untold importance to his death, and ensures the highest spiritual results in the purification of the conscience. By the "eternal Spirit" is commonly understood that glory which is described in the commencement of the Gospel of John. It is probable that the writer looked back to the passage in which he declares that Jesus is "the Brightness of the Father's glory, and express Image of his person." It reminds us of his transfiguration, and the glimpses of his superhuman dignity and power which lighted up his earthly ministry. It is a thought before which we stand in silent and essential wonder, and feel that it lifts the sacrifice of our Lord to a height of glory which transcends our clearest vision. This sacrifice cleanses the conscience from "dead works." Death in the Old Testament always suggests pollution. The conscience which is defiled by dead works sheds a clear and penetrating light on the disqualifying nature of sin, and the exclusion from the service of God which it produces. The precious blood of Christ, which cleanses the conscience, makes it full of the life of love, gratitude, and filial service. The fruit which comes from life is holiness now, and hereafter it is everlasting life. It opens the prospect of fellowship with God, who is the "living God," and communes with his people from off the mercy-seat. The life of those who are forgiven turns to God, and

the living God holds fellowship with them, which is the high privilege of believers now, and the pledge of its continuance in the world to come.—B.

Vers. 15—22.—“*The Mediator of the new testament.*” The ideas contained in this section are—

I. THE TWOFOLD EFFECT OF THE DEATH OF OUR LORD. The free surrender of his life was the means of removing, in the case of believers, the burden of those sins which the Mosaic Law could not take away. The sins committed under the first covenant were not forgiven by acts of sacrifice and the aid of priestly service, which, though ordained by Jehovah, were unequal to produce peace and purity of conscience. It may be that there is a retrospective effect of the death of Christ which furnished the ground of the dispensation of mercy before the mystery of his atonement was revealed. Considering the stress which is laid upon the value of forgiveness in the Scripture, the glory of Jesus Christ shines in the fact that he is the cause, by his death and mediatorial office, of its safe and secure enjoyment. The next effect is to be traced in the vocation of believers to an eternal inheritance, which is to stand in sublime contrast to Canaan, respecting which the Jews say (Isa. lxxiii. 18), “The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while.” That inheritance was defiled by idolatry, desolated by heathen invaders, and ruled over by the pagan power of Rome; but that to which our Lord calls his followers is an “inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away.” There is a sublime harmony here between the death and mediation of our Lord, and the everlasting effects which they produce and secure.

II. THE VITAL FORCE OF THE COVENANT ARISES FROM THE DEATH OF CHRIST. Here the writer passes over to the idea of a testament or will which is of force when the testator dies. The covenant is a Divine arrangement which includes two parties, for a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is One, and his people are those who, through his condescending mercy, stand on the other side as those who accept and rejoice in the arrangement. The mention of the inheritance suggests the thought of a testament, by which, as soon as the testator dies, the heir enters upon the enjoyment of the inheritance. This is an auxiliary illustration which aids us to understand the mighty love of the Son of God, who was ready to endure the woe and agony of the cross, to bequeath to us the blessing of forgiveness now, and the enjoyment of the imperishable inheritance of heaven in the future life.

III. THE CONFIRMATION OF THE NEW COVENANT ILLUSTRATED BY HISTORICAL FACTS. The allusion in vers. 18—22 is to the original establishment of the covenant with Israel at Sinai. There are several deviations from the Mosaic narrative in this section. In the account in Exodus there is no mention of goats, hyssop, scarlet wool, the book, the tabernacle and its vessels, and therefore there may be here a traditional account; or the writer combined several subsequent acts of Levitical services which had the same signification and object. The essential truth contained in this solemn transaction was the application of blood to ratify the covenant which was made between God and his people at Sinai. It was the Divine will that such should be the method, according to which the old tabernacle, the chosen nation, and the first covenant should be consecrated, and should foretell and typify future events of the highest importance for the world. “Without shedding of blood there was no remission.” This voice was heard century after century in the services of the Jewish Law; and now that Christ has become “the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world,” the truth has received a more solemn confirmation. If he is rejected, “there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins.” If he is received and trusted in, there is peace with God, and hope of eternal life. The phrase which Moses used, “This is the blood of the covenant,” recalls the sacred words of Jesus, who said when he took the cup at the Passover feast, and looked forward to the covenant of grace, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many unto the remission of sins.”—B.

Ver. 1.—*The orderly arrangements of the new covenant.* Evidently a double meaning is possible to the adjective *kosmikos*. The sanctuary sheltered within the tabernacle was a sanctuary of this world; but is that all the writer means by the word he uses here? Surely we must remember the antithesis between cosmos and chaos. The furniture of the sanctuary was not a collection of objects placed anywhere and

anyhow. There was as much symbolism in the order and relation of these objects as in the objects themselves. All worship and holy service had to be according to Divine regulations. And as all was *κοσμηδς* in the visible, symbolic, temporary sanctuary, so all must also be *κοσμηδς* in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle.

I. WE MUST RECOGNIZE CHRIST'S PLACE IN THIS SANCTUARY. The new covenant has its sanctuary, even as the old, and that sanctuary is to be found wherever Christ is manifesting himself to take away sin. It is the presence of Christ that makes the holiest place we know, and there is no making of a truly holy place without him. In the old covenant, everything was gathered round the tables of the Law as a centre. They expressed the will of God. And so now the centre of our religious life, around which all is to be gathered in orderly relations, is to be found in Christ—at once a High Priest to enter into the true holy of holies, and One to show the Law of God in actual working, as something not too high for human attainment. We are to worship and serve God through Christ, and there is no other way whereby we may become faultless in the presence of his glory.

II. WE MUST RECOGNIZE OUR OWN PLACE IN THE SANCTUARY. What are we doing in the way of orderly, well-considered daily service? Is the lamp of our life shining forth every day? Do we help to spread a table for the varied necessities of men, remembering that whatsoever we do for them is done for Christ, and whatsoever is done for Christ is done for God? There is to be a measure of order in our own personal religious life—repentance leading to faith, and faith opening up the way to all that is holy, pure, and Christ-like.—Y.

Ver. 9.—*The parabolic function of the tabernacle-services.* The tabernacle, with its contents and its institutions, was one great parable embracing and uniting many subordinate parables. A parable looking towards the time of the new covenant—the “present time,” as the writer calls it; or, as we might even more closely render it, the impending season. For in God's economy the new state of things is to be ever looked at as impending. So Christ would have us, who rejoice in his first advent, to be ever making ready for his second one. And in the same way the men of the old covenant had to be on the look-out for the initiation of the new. Rejoicing in what Moses had given them, they looked eagerly for what Messiah had to give; and in the mean time Moses had given them parables through the eye, even as in after times Christ gave his disciples parables in words. Such mode was suitable for the time and the purpose. What parabolic teaching was there, then, in the tabernacle and the things connected with it?

I. THE REALITY OF GOD'S DWELLING WITH MEN. Each Israelite family had its tent, and Jehovah's tent was in the midst of all, a centre of unity, protection, and glory. Jehovah was the Companion of his people in all their pilgrimage and vicissitudes. It is only as we recollect this that we get at the full significance of John's expression concerning the Word becoming flesh and tabernacling among us, full of grace and truth (John i. 14). The glory that belonged to the tabernacle was thus a parable of the Incarnation glory.

II. THE POSSIBILITY OF SATISFACTORY INTERCOURSE BETWEEN GOD AND MAN. It was dangerous for a man to meddle in Divine things according to his own inclination and his own wisdom. Yet he could not stand aside and neglect Divine things altogether. Such a course was equally dangerous with the other. But if he would only submit to the way of Jehovah's appointment, attending to every detail, and striving to comprehend the undoubted purpose in it, then he was assuredly in the way of safety. He was doing what God wanted him to do with the resources then within his reach. And though an obedience of this kind, an obedience in certain external rites, could not take away all trouble of conscience, yet when a man comprehended that Jehovah had even this in view, he would feel that what he enjoyed not now he would enjoy hereafter. Though the blood of bulls and goats could not put away sin and wash out the heart's deep defilement, yet the blood-shedding was not in vain, if it intimated the coming of something that would take away sin.

III. THE POSSIBILITY OF REAL SERVICE. In itself, the elaborate ritual of the tabernacle was nothing. Save as it was parabolic and provocative of hope and aspiration, it could not be called other than a waste of time. “What mean ye by this service?” was a question which might well be put to every Levitical person every day.

But when the service of the high priest looked forward to the sacrificial cleansing service of Christ in perpetuity, and when the service of all the subordinate attendants looked forward to the daily obedience of Christians, faithful in little things, then assuredly the service of the tabernacle gets lifted above a mechanical routine. Under the old covenant, a whole tribe, separated for ritual observance, serving Jehovah in formal religious ordinances, was thereby serving, not only a nation, but all mankind. Serving God in appearance, the Levite served men in reality. Now, under the new covenant, we serve God in serving men. The Christian, because he is a Christian, has most power of all men to serve his brother man.—Y.

Ver. 12.—*The eternal redemption.* One cannot but be struck with the occurrence three times within four verses of the word "eternal." There is the eternal redemption, the eternal Spirit, the eternal inheritance. The change from the old covenant to the new was also an escape from the temporary to the abiding. In the old covenant there had to be a constant succession of things, each lasting for a little time, and then by the nature of it giving way, and needing something new to fill its place. "Now," the writer of this Epistle seems to say, "all good things have become eternal." And first there is the eternal redemption. By contrast, then, we have to think of—

I. A REDEMPTION WHICH IS NOT ETERNAL. This idea of redemption and ransom happily an unfamiliar one to us. But there was a time when people perfectly comprehended the continual risk to themselves and their property from the attacks of strong robber-tribes, who would take a man away and keep him in captivity till his friends provided a ransom. And that ransom did only for the special occasion; there might come another captivity which would need its own ransom. So it was with the services of the old covenant. At no time was Israel allowed to think that enough of beasts had been slain on the altar. No sooner was one accumulation of defilement cleansed away than another began to appear. And thus, also, no sooner did the priest wipe away the blood of one beast than he began to make ready for shedding the blood of another. The task was endless, and no satisfaction or peace came out of it, save the satisfaction of knowing that if this redemption had not been attended to, things would have been infinitely worse.

II. THE REDEMPTION WHICH IS ETERNAL. Christ entered once for all into the holy place, and there he remains in perpetual and profoundly fruitful mediation between God and man. How different from the Jewish priest, slaying his victim, and then before long asking for another! The whole conditions of sacrifice and obedience are altered. Under the old covenant the people themselves had to provide the sacrifices; but now Jesus comes, providing the sacrifice himself, not asking us to do anything save to accept, humbly and gratefully, the completeness of his own service. We cannot provide an eternal redemption for ourselves. All we can do is to escape for the time, and to-morrow we must face to-morrow's dangers. What a grand thing to understand in our very hearts that Jesus is emphatically *the Redeemer*! We are not ungrateful for the temporary redemptions of life, and the minor redeemers; but we must ever take care lest, in our natural solicitude for these matters, we neglect the eternal redemption and the eternal Redeemer. If we are safe in vital union with him, then what are all other captivities and all other losses?—Y.

Vers. 13, 14.—*Christ a self-presented Offering to purify the consciences of men.*
I. AN ARGUMENT FROM THE LESS TO THE GREATER. The writer reminds his readers of a kind of cleansing already practised by them, and believed to be efficacious for its purpose. From their point of view, they had no difficulty in believing that something was really done when defiled people were sprinkled with the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer. Whatever had communicated the defilement was thus removed—in a mysterious way, it is true, and so that there might be no visible sign; but still there was the feeling and the faith that things were really made different. If, then, it was so easy to believe that the sacrifice of brute-life produced such results, what profound and permanent results might not be expected to flow from the cleansing application of the blood of Christ? For in the one case it was the blood of a brute beast poured out and then done with for ever, available for only one occasion, and needing for the next occasion that another beast should be slain. But here is the shedding of the

blood of Christ, the continuous and accurate presentation of the Christ's own life by Christ himself. Surely the writer here is thinking of something more than the shedding of the blood of Christ's natural life on the cross. He is thinking of what Christ is doing behind the veil, on the eternal, invisible scene. The work, whatever it is, is the work done by Christ through an eternal Spirit. He is continually pouring forth his life to cleanse the consciences of believers. Christ's death was a passing into the holy of holies, to go on with the deep realities of which the holiest offerings of the old covenant were only feeble symbols. The writer of the Epistle, therefore, wanted his readers to appropriate the ineffably great results of what Christ was doing.

II. THE MEANS OF APPROPRIATION. Clearly the appropriation was by faith. Indeed, all the good that could come through any cleansing ceremony of the old covenant came by faith—often superstitious enough, no doubt, and having little or no result in the improvement of character; but still it was faith. Faith was the element keeping these ceremonials in existence from generation to generation. If nothing more, there was at least the faith that something dreadful would happen if the ceremonials were discontinued. If, then, men will only labour to keep themselves in living connection with the ever-loving Christ, whose life is all the more fruitful since he vanished from the eye of sense, what great things they may expect! Belief in Christ is Christ's own instrument for cleansing the heart, so that there may not any more go out of it the things that defile a man. What wonder that before he closes his Epistle the writer should be so copious in extolling the triumphs of faith, and enforcing the need of it in all the relations of Christian life!—Y.

Ver. 15.—*The eternal inheritance.* I. CONSIDER THE TEMPORAL INHERITANCE. The land of Canaan, which was connected with the old covenant. This land could only be called an inheritance in a typical sense, for the satisfactions which Israel was taught to expect did not come in reality. For as the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin, so neither could any mere terrestrial possession ever satisfy a human spirit. This land was but the standing-ground for a time, the place of discipline and revelation. It is always necessary to show by a sufficient experience and consideration the inadequacy of earthly things for those whose proper kinship is with heaven; and the more clearly this inadequacy appears, the more clearly will it appear that somewhere there must be something entirely satisfying. The earthly inheritance proved to Israel a constant scene of struggle, temptation, and loss; and if, by some happy period of lull, an Israelite had something that might not untruly be called satisfaction out of his inheritance, yet the day came when he had to leave it. The inheritance was a more abiding thing than the possessor. Thus, in any message of comfort from God to his people, it could not fail to be pointed out that the best of earthly possessions fall far short of what a loving God intends for his separated and obedient people.

II. THE ATTAINMENT OF THE ETERNAL INHERITANCE. This inheritance may well be considered in a twofold aspect. It may be considered as something within us, and also as something without. The Israelite possession of the land of Canaan would have deserved something nearer the name of reality if only the Israelite had been first of all in possession of himself. But he was at the mercy of his lusts and selfish inclinations. Real self-possession means heart-submission to God. If we would enter on the real and satisfying inheritance, God must first of all enter upon his proper inheritance in us. Self-control, which suggests something like the caging of a wild beast, must be exchanged for self-surrender. And all this is to come through the searching redemption and cleansing effected by Christ. Then are we ready for that eternal inheritance, which is also external. Christ only can redeem us from present limitations and corruptions, and how great those limitations and corruptions are we have as yet no sufficient perception. It is noteworthy how the *λύτρωσις* of ver. 12 is strengthened into the *ἀπολύτρωσις* of ver. 15. We shall enter on an eternal inheritance, suited to the spirit of man—an infinite, inexhaustible possession; where every one will have exceeding abundance, from which he can never be parted, and of which he will never grow tired. In comparison with that reality, the most real things of this world will thin away into dreams. In comparison with its everlastingness, the everlasting hills will be as dissolving clouds.—Y.

Ver. 22.—*The death of Jesus the seal of the new covenant.* In this passage there is

allusion to an ancient, cherished custom of making a covenant over a slain animal. In the light of this custom probably we must explain Gen. xv. There Abram is represented as dividing a heifer, a goat, and a ram, and when darkness came a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between the pieces. Then follows the significant statement that in the same day Jehovah made a covenant with Abram. The idea in the English version of a testament and a testator is not so much misleading as meaningless, for there is no reason at all why a testament should be referred to, but every reason why the writer should go on expounding and illustrating the new covenant as compared with the old. To us, of course, the custom here mentioned is hardly intelligible, but the mention of it would throw a great deal of light on the subject at the time the reference was made. The custom may even have been still in vogue, and human customs have ever been subordinated to Divine ends. Hence we have here a special aspect of the death of Christ. It is presented as—

THE SEAL OF A SOLEMN COVENANT BETWEEN GOD AND MAN. The very existence of Christ is a covenant between the Divine and the human. The glorious things that were in Christ because of the Divine Spirit dwelling in him are promised to us by their very presence in Christ. All the good things coming to Christ because of his humanity are equally offered to us because of our humanity; and all that Christ did in his humanity makes us responsible for doing the same. The promises of God are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. We may also add that the obligations of man are defined and settled in Christ Jesus. Thus there is a covenant, and we may well look on the death of Christ as giving that covenant shape in a formal transaction. For there God gave his well-beloved Son to death, the pledge of all that he is willing to give. And Jesus surrendered himself to death, giving the greatest proof of obedience and devotion which a human being can give. Christ's death becomes our death, the pledge of an individual covenant on our part, if only we choose to enter into it. The death of Christ points out a solemn duty and a large expectation. And if the death of Christ is a seal of the covenant, how much is the significance of that seal added to by the resurrection and the ascension into glory!—Y.

Ver. 28.—The difference between Christ's first and second advent. I. THE FIRST ADVENT. Here Christ shares the common lot of men; he dies, and dies once for all. There is no dying and rising and dying again. He is offered as a Sacrifice once for all, to bear the sins of many. And here, of course, the death of Christ must be taken as representing the whole of his life in the flesh. His life in every hour and every faculty was vicarious. He was ever striving to show that he could neutralize the consequence of sins committed, and prevent the commission of sins to come. His great aim was, in every sense of the expression, to take away sin. And from his place of power and glory on high this is his aim still. No matter how laden the conscience may be with guilt and the remembrance of folly, no matter how full of weakness the life, Christ has all fulness of power and steadiness of disposition to restore strength, rectitude, and purity. Let it be remembered that this is Christ's *present work*. Christ is in his Church continually, that his Church may have success in setting him forth as taking away the sin of the world. Whenever we come across sin, in ourselves or in others, we should ever view it in relation to Christ. Then we shall be filled with a sense both of responsibility and hope. Sin is not a burden to be sullenly endured, but to be removed by faith in Christ.

II. THE SECOND ADVENT. In Christ's first coming everything is connected with sin. He is lifted up to draw sinners to him. All the energy of the Spirit and all the agencies of the gospel are employed to persuade sinners to accept the sin-bearing, sin-removing work of Christ. But he is coming a second time, altogether apart from sin—coming to deliver into everlasting security those who have believed in him. The completeness of salvation is always looked upon in the New Testament as a thing yet to come. The promise is of immediate safety, as far as it can be given in our present surroundings. It is our own fault if we are not safe from backsliding, temptation, and doctrinal error. But in the fullest sense of the word salvation, we are saved, as Paul says, by hope. We are hoping for full possession of every good, full security from every evil. When Christ has taken away the sin of the world, he will take away the peril, the insecurity, of the world.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER X.

VERS. 1—19.—CONCLUDING SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT WITH RESPECT TO CHRIST'S ETERNAL PRIESTHOOD.

Ver. 1.—For the Law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. The Law is said here to exhibit a shadow (*σκιά*) of the good things to come (*τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν*), viz. of the "good things" of which Christ is come as "High Priest" (ch. ix. 11), belonging to the *μέλλον αἶών* (ch. vi. 5), *μέλλουσα οἰκουμένη* (ch. ii. 5), which is still, in its full realization, future to us, though already inaugurated by Christ, and though we have already *tasted* the powers of it (ch. vi. 5). Similarly (ch. viii. 5) the priests under the Law are said to have served a copy and shadow of the heavenly things; i.e. of the heavenly realities to be revealed in the "coming age." To "shadow" is opposed "very image" (*εἰκόνα*), which means, not a representation apart from the things (as a statue or portrait may be called an image), but (as emphasized by *ἀντί*) the actual presentment of the things themselves; which were, in fact, archetypal and prior to the shadows of the Law, though their manifestation was reserved to the future age. Such is the sense of *εἰκόνα* in Col. iii. 10, *κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ κτισσέντος αὐτόν*; and Rom. viii. 29, *συμμόρφους τῆς εἰκόνης τοῦ υἱοῦ*. (Of Col. i. 15, where Christ is called *εἰκόνα τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου*: cf. also Col. ii. 17, where *σκιά* is opposed to *σῶμα*—shadow to body.) In the latter part of the verse, "they," who "offer," are the priests of the Law; "the comers thereunto" (*οἱ προσερχομένοι*) are the people who resort to the rites. "Make perfect" (*τελειῶσαι*) means full accomplishment for them of what is aimed at: in this case, remission of sin, and acceptance after complete atonement. The verb *τελειῶν*, though variously applied, signifies always full completion of the purpose in view (cf. ch. vii. 19, *οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐτελείωσεν ὁ νόμος*). (For its application to Christ himself, see under ch. ii. 10; v. 9.)

Vers. 2, 3.—For them (i.e. had it been so able) would they (the sacrifices) not have ceased to be offered, because that the worshippers, having been once purged, should have had no more conscience of sins? But (on the contrary) in those sacrifices there is a remembrance made of sins year by year. The very annual repetition of the same expiatory rites on the Day of Atonement ex-

pressed in itself the idea, not of the *putting away* (*ἀθέτησις*, ch. ix. 26) or *oblivion* (ch. x. 17) of sin, but a *recalling to mind* of its continual presence. In the following verse the reason of this is found in the nature of the sacrifices themselves; it being impossible for the blood of irrational animals to cleanse moral guilt: it could only avail for the "passing over" (*πάρεσις*, Rom. iii. 25) of sins, as symbolizing an effectual atonement to come in the spiritual sphere of things.

Ver. 4.—For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats (specified as being the offerings of the Day of Atonement) should take away sins. The principle of the insufficiency of animal sacrifices having been thus expressed, confirmation of it is now further adduced from the Old Testament itself, together with a prophetic anticipation of the great self-oblation which was to take their place.

Vers. 5—7.—Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body didst thou prepare me: In whole burnt offering and offerings for sin thou hadst no pleasure: Then said I, Lo, I am come (in the volume (i.e. roll) of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God. The quotation is from Ps. xl. 6, 7, 8. It is entitled "a psalm of David," nor is there anything in the psalm itself incompatible with his authorship. The question of authorship is, however, unimportant; all that is required for the purpose of the quotation being that it should have been the utterance of an inspired psalmist. The primary import of the passage quoted is that the psalmist, after deliverance from great affliction, for which he gives thanks, expresses his desire to act on the lesson learnt in his trouble by giving himself entirely to God's service. And the service in which God delights he declares to be, not sacrifices of slain beasts, but the doing of his will, the ears being opened to his Word, and his Law being within the heart. Now, bearing in mind what was said under ch. i. 5, of the principle on which words used in the Old Testament with a primary human reference are applied in the New Testament directly to Christ, we shall have no difficulty in understanding such application here. The psalmist, it may be allowed, spoke in his own person, and as expressing his own feelings and desires; but, writing under inspiration, he aspired to an ideal beyond his own attainment, the true ideal for humanity, to be realized only in Christ. The ideal is such perfect self-oblation of the human will to God's as to supersede and render needless the existing sacrifices, which are so-

knowledge to be, in their own nature, valueless. That the psalmist did not really contemplate the fulfilment of this ideal in himself is evident from the penitential confessions of the latter verses of the psalm. It is but the yearning of inspired humanity for what was really needed for reconciliation with God, such yearning being in itself a prophecy. Hence what was thus spoken in the Spirit is adduced as expressing the mind and work of him who fulfilled all those prophetic yearnings, and effected, as Man and for man, what the holy men of old longed to do but could not. The expression, "when he cometh into the world," reminds us of ch. i. 6. The word *ελεγχόμενος*, here used, is connected in thought with the *ἔγω* ("I am come") in the quotation. Idle are the inquiries of some commentators as to the precise time, either before or after the Incarnation, at which our Lord is to be conceived as so speaking. Enough to say that his purpose in coming into the world is in these significant words expressed. It is noteworthy, in regard to the attribution of this utterance to him, how frequently he is recorded to have spoken of having *come* into the world for the accomplishment of a purpose. "*Vento, vel potius, sent, symbolum quasi Domini Jesu fuit*" (Bengel). (See Matt. v. 17; x. 34, 35; xviii. 11; xx. 28; Mark i. 38; Luke ix. 56; John ix. 39; x. 10; and especially for close agreement with the language of the passage before us, John vi. 38, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own *will*, but the *will* of him that sent me;" and John xii. 46, "*I am come a light into the world.*") The psalm is quoted from the LXX., with slight variation, not worth considering, as it does not affect the sense of the passage. But the variation of the LXX. from the Hebrew text requires notice. (1) Instead of "a body didst thou prepare for me (*σῶμα καταρτίσω μοι*)" of the LXX. and the quotation from it, the Hebrew has "mine ears hast thou opened;" literally, "ears hast thou dug for me," meaning probably, "formed the cavity of my ears through which thy Word may penetrate," equivalent to "given me ears to hear," with reference, of course, to spiritual auscultation. If to the Hebrew verb כָּרַח be assigned here the sense of *piercing*, rather than *hollowing out*, implying an entrance affected through the ears already formed, the general sense remains the same. In either case the word *καταρτίσω* may be accounted for, as being a free rendering, intended to give the meaning of the figure. But the substitution of "body" for "ears" is not so easily accounted for. One conjecture is that some transcriber of the Alexandrian translation of the Hebrew had inadvertently joined the last letter of the pre-

ceding word, *ἡσέλῃσας*, to the following word, *σῶμα*, and that the TI of CQTIA was then changed into the M of CQMA, so as to make sense of the word thus formed. But this is only conjecture. That some copies of the LXX. had *σῶμα* appears from the fact that the Vulgate, translated from the LXX., reads *aures perfectisti mihi*, and that some manuscripts of the LXX. still have *σῶμα*, or *σῶμα*. Thus there can be little doubt that *σῶμα* was a wrong rendering of the Hebrew, however originating, which the writer of the Epistle found in the copies of the LXX. which he used. For that he himself altered the word to suit his purpose, and that the alteration got into copies of the LXX. from the Epistle, is highly improbable, considering the general accuracy of his quotations, and his purpose of proving his positions from the sacred documents to which his readers could refer. As to the unimportance of any such variations from the original Hebrew in the quotations of the Epistle from the LXX., as long as the argument is not affected, see what is said under ch. i. 7 with respect to the quotation from Ps. civ. In this case the variation certainly does not affect the argument. For though the word *σῶμα* is certainly taken up again in ver. 10 as applicable to Christ, yet the argument of the passage by no means rests on this word, but on *σῶμα*. This is indeed a passage (as was observed under ch. ix. 14) notable for the very fact that the essence of the atonement is in it represented as consisting, not so much in its physical accompaniments as in its being a spiritual act of perfect self-oblation. (2) The more probable meaning of the phrase translated in the LXX. and the quotation, "it is written of me (*γέγραπται περὶ ἐμοῦ*)" is in the Hebrew, "it is prescribed unto me," i.e. "laid on me as a duty;" this being also the sense in which the same words occur in 2 Kings xxii. 13, "Great is the wrath of the Lord . . . because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is *prescribed* to us;" where the LXX. translates, *τὰ γεγραμμένα κατ' ἐμὸν*. The most obvious reference of the Hebrew psalm is to the Book of the Law generally, in which the duty of fulfilling the Divine will is enjoined, rather than to any *prophecy*, applied by the writer to himself individually. If so, it is not necessary to inquire what prophecy about himself David might have had in view; whether e.g. Gen. xlix. 10; Numb. xxiv. 17; or Deut. xvii. 14, *et seq.* But the phrase, *περὶ ἐμοῦ*, does certainly rather suggest a *prophecy*, and such suggestion is peculiarly appropriate in the application to Christ. Well, then, if here again there is some variation from the

original Hebrew text, it is still such as to leave the general argument intact.

Vers. 8—10.—Saying above that sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and offerings for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein (such as are offered according to the Law); then hath he said, Lo, I come to do thy will; i.e. he has made this second assertion while making the first also. The purpose of thus putting it is to show the connection between the two assertions; that fulfilment of God's will is spoken of as a *substitute* for sacrifices, whose inutilty in themselves had been declared. Yes; he taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. In the which will (the Divine will, willing our redemption through Christ, and perfectly fulfilled by him) we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. For the sense to be attached to the verb *ἀγιάσω* see under ch. ii. 11. It is not our progressive sanctification by the Holy Ghost that is intended, but the hallowing effected for us once for all, as denoted by the perfect participle *ἡγιασμένοι*.

The remainder of this concluding summary (vers. 11—19) serves to weave together the various threads of the foregoing argument and emphasize the result.

Vers. 11—13.—And every priest indeed standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but he, having offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made the footstool of his feet. Thus with the one perfectly accomplished and for ever availing sacrifice is brought into connection, as its result, the fulfilment in Christ for man of the ideal of Ps. viii. 6 (which was set forth in ch. ii. 5—10; see the remarks there made), and also of the Son's exaltation to the right hand of God, declared in Ps. cx. (referred to in ch. i. 13, and brought fully into view in ch. viii. 1, after the chapter about Melchizedek). Be it observed that the priesthood "after the order of Melchizedek" in itself implied this exaltation, which was in fact inferred from it. For the priesthood after this order, having been shown to be eternal and unchangeable, was further seen, from Ps. cx., to be conjoined to the eternal royalty at God's right hand.

Ver. 14.—For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. The tense of the participle *ἡγιασμένους*, instead of *ἡγιασμένους*, as in ver. 10, does not involve a different sense of the verb, viz. the ordinary one associated with the word "sanctify." When it was necessary to express by the word itself the accom-

plishment of sanctification in the sense intended, the perfect participle was used; here the subjects of the same sanctification are denoted, the accomplishment being expressed by *τετελειώκε* (cf. *οἱ ἡγιασμένοι*, ch. ii. 11). The meaning of *τετελειώκε* ("hath perfected") may be taken as ruled by *τοὺς ἡγιασμένους*: hath perfected them as *ἅγιοι*, done all that was required for their being such, without any need of any further offering (cf. *supra*, ch. x. 1).

Vers. 15—18.—And the Holy Ghost also testifieth to us: for after that he hath said, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; (then saith he), And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. The apodosis to "after that he hath said," not distinctly marked in the Greek or in the A.V., is denoted in the above rendering by "then saith he" before ver. 17. Another view is that it begins earlier in the sentence, being introduced by "saith the Lord," which occurs in the quotation from Jeremiah. But this is improbable, since (1) words in the quotation itself could not well be intended to be understood as the quoter's own; (2) the quotation down to ver. 17 is continuous, whereas the citation of ver. 17 is in the original passage of Jeremiah separated from the preceding one; (3) the logical conclusion intended to be drawn requires ver. 17 to be the apodosis. For the writer's purpose in referring once more to Jeremiah's prediction of the "new covenant" is to show from it the completeness and finality of Christ's atonement; and this, he argues, follows from this characteristic of the "new covenant" being added to the previous description of it—"Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

CH. X. 19—END.

HORTATORY PORTION OF THE EPISTLE.

The great doctrine of Christ's eternal priesthood having been led up to, established by argument, and at length fully expounded, it remains only to press the practical result of a belief in it in alternate tones of encouragement and of warning.

We have seen that, even in the earlier chapters, hortatory passages were frequently interposed, showing the purpose all along in the writer's mind. In the central and deepest part of the argument (ch. vii. 1—x. 19) there were none, close and uninterrupted attention to the course of thought

being then demanded. But now, the argument being completed, the previous exhortations are taken up again, and enforced in consequently fuller and deeper tones. The connection of thought between these final admonitions and those previously interposed is evident when we compare the very expressions in ch. x. 19—23 with those in ch. iv. 14—16, and the warnings of ch. x. 26, etc., with those of ch. vi. 4, etc. Thus appears, as in other ways also, the carefully arranged plan of the Epistle, different in this respect from the undoubted Epistles of St. Paul, in which the thoughts generally follow each other without great regard to artistic arrangement. This, however, is in itself by no means conclusive against St. Paul's authorship, since there would be likely to be just this difference between a set treatise composed for a purpose, and a letter written *currente calamo* by the same author. It does, however, mark a different class of composition, and is suggestive, as far as it goes, of a different writer.

Vers. 19—21.—Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter (literally, *for the entrance*) into the holiest (literally, *the holies*, i.e. the holy place, as *τὸ ἅγιον* is translated in ch. ix. 25, but meaning, there as here, the holy of holies) by the blood of Jesus, which (entrance) he consecrated (or, *dedicated*, as the same verb *ἐγκαινίσω* is translated, ch. ix. 18, with reference to the Mosaic tabernacle) for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a great Priest (*ἱερεὺς μέγας*, not *ἀρχιερεὺς*, high priest; but a priest of higher order than any earthly priest; cf. ch. v. 14, *ἀρχιερεὺς μέγας* over the house of God. The epithet *πρόσφατον* ("new") applied to the "way" dedicated for us by Christ, though meaning originally, according to its etymology, "newly slain," is commonly used to express "recent" only. And so here. It is a new way in relation to the old one of the high priest through the veil—a way untrodden by man till opened and dedicated by "the great Priest." The epithet *ζῶσαν* ("living") applied to the way distinguishes it, as a spiritual mode of approach, from the old one. "Opponitur exanimo. Per prosopopoeiam *vita* adscribitur *vite*, ex ipsa *vita* Christi, qui est *Vita*" (Bengel; see John xiv. 6). But what is the meaning of the *veil* (*καταvéραςμα*, the word always used of the veil in the tabernacle or temple) being said to be "his flesh"? The idea cannot be simply that he passed through the human nature assumed at his incarnation to the heavenly throne;

for the intended counterpart to the high priest's passing through the veil must have been after the completed sacrifice. It is rather that, at the moment of death, when, after saying, "It is finished," he "gave up the ghost," the human flesh (which had through all the ages been as a veil hiding "the unseen" from man, and behind which Christ himself had "tabernacled" during his human life) was, as it were, rent asunder and the new way opened. And that this was so was signified by the rending in twain of the veil of the temple from the top to the bottom, mentioned by St. Matthew (xxvi. 51), at the very moment of the death upon the cross. This incident may have suggested to the writer the expression used. "Quum primum Christus per momentum mortis transierat, præsto fuit mera *virtus* et *vita*. Τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ, *carnem suam*, quæ item scissæ est, ut velum" (Bengel). "The house of God" in ver. 21 is a resumption of the thought of ch. iii. 1—7, where Christ was shown to be greater than Moses, as being the Son over the house of God, having (be it observed) been called *ἀρχιερεὺς* in ver. 1. (For the comprehensive meaning of the expression, not limited either to the Mosaic dispensation or the visible Church, see what was said under ch. iii. 4.) On the now firmly grounded doctrinal bases of (1) open access through Christ to the mercy-seat, (2) his ever-availing intercession, are built the exhortations (1) to confidence, (2) to persistence in faith and corresponding conduct.

Ver. 22.—Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our body washed with pure water. "Let us draw near" (*προσερχόμεθα*) is a liturgical phrase, denoting the approach of the people, after ceremonial atonement, to the earthly sanctuary (cf. ver. 1, *τοὺς προσερχομένους*). We may now draw near to the very heavenly mercy-seat, without any sense of a bar to our doing so on the ground of consciousness of sin. In Christ we are to see accomplished all that is needed for atonement. But there are conditions also required in ourselves, expressed first by the "true heart," and the "fulness of faith," and then by the clauses that follow. These clauses, like *προσερχόμεθα*, have a liturgical basis—that of the blood-sprinkling (e.g. of the people with the blood of the covenant under Mount Sinai, ch. ix. 19, and of the priests on their consecration, Lev. viii. 23) and of the ablutions before sacrificial service (Lev. viii. 6; xvi. 4, 24; Exod. xxx. 39). Hence these two participial clauses are not to be separated from each other, and seem best to be both taken in connection with the preceding *προσερχόμεθα*. "Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience" means our having

the inward consciousness of debarring sin removed through the blood of Christ; the "full assurance of faith" in the completed atonement, and the "true heart," being presupposed. The conjoined clause, *καὶ λελουμένοι*, etc., is capable also of being figuratively interpreted, in the sense that "our sinful bodies" have been "made clean," so as to be offered through life acceptably as "a living sacrifice," as well as "our souls washed through his most precious blood." And this may be taken as implied. But the terms *body* and *water* after *hearts* and *blood* certainly suggest a direct reference to baptism. And such definite allusion is in keeping with references elsewhere to the beginning of the Christian life (see Acts ii. 38; xxii. 16; Rom. vi. 3, 4; 1 Cor. xii. 13; Gal. iii. 27; Col. ii. 12; 1 Pet. iii. 21). The passage last referred to is apposite to that before us in that with an undoubted mention of baptism is conjoined "the answer of a good conscience toward God."

Vers. 23—25.—Let us hold fast the confession (*ὁμολογίαν*, see ch. iii. 1, and *reff.*; also ch. iv. 14) of our hope without wavering (*ἀκλυσή*, agreeing with "confession"); for he is faithful that promised; and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. The readers, having been exhorted to confidence towards God, are further warned against remissness in confession before men, or in their duties within the Church towards each other. They had once, at their baptism, "confessed the good confession" (*τὴν καλὴν ὁμολογίαν*, 1 Tim. vi. 12). Let not the recurrence of Jewish prejudices, or either influence or persecution from their Jewish compatriots, or any delay of the *Parousia*, induce them to waver in maintaining it. Some among them did, it could not be denied, show signs of such wavering, notably in their remiss attendance at Christian worship; let the faithful give heed to keeping faith alive in themselves and others, and especially through the means of the regular Church assemblies. That by *τὴν ἐκτενέστεραν συναγωγὴν ἑαυτῶν* is meant definitely the actual assembling together of Christians for reading, exhortation, and worship (such as is referred to in 1 Cor. xi.; Jas. ii. 2, etc.; and described by Justin Martyr, 'Apol.' c. 87), we hold confidently with the majority of commentators and with Chrysostom. The word *ἐκτενέστεραν* occurs in the New Testament only here and 2 Thess. ii. 1, where it denotes the gathering together at the *Parousia*. In 2 Macc. ii. 7, where alone it occurs in the LXX., it expresses the actual assembling of people

together, as does the verb *ἐπισυνάγω*, both in the LXX. and the New Testament (cf. Matt. xxiii. 37; xxiv. 31; Mark xiii. 27; i. 33; Luke xii. 1). Hence, and in regard to the context as well as the etymology of the word, we may reject the less definite meaning, by some here assigned to it, of *Christian communion* (*conjugatio fidelium*), and the explanation of Bengel: "Sensus est, non modo debetis synagagam frequentare, ut Judæi, quod libentius facitis, sed etiam episyntagagam, ut Christiani. Neque tamen innuitur præcise aggregatio ad unum locum, aut aggregatio ad unam fidem; sed, medio sensu, congregatio mutua per amorem et communicatio publica et privata officiorum Christianorum." The seen approach of the second advent (*τὴν ἡμέραν*: cf. 1 Cor. iii. 13) is adduced as an additional argument against remissness. The word *ἀκλυσή* seems to imply more than the general belief in its imminence, founded on the language of Christ. It would seem as if the signs of the times were interpreted as denoting its approach (cf. 1 John ii. 18). And it may be that they were rightly so interpreted in reference to the primary fulfilment of our Saviour's words, though to that only, as the event proved. The blending together in the discourses of Matt. xxiv., Mark xiii., Luke xvii. and xxi., of the times of the fall of Jerusalem and of the final day, would naturally lead Christians to regard the signs of the first event as denoting the other also. And indeed the imminence of the first, of which the signs were really apparent, was in itself a peculiar reason why the Hebrew Christians should stick resolutely to Christianity, for its own sake and apart from Judaism. Else might their whole hold on Christ be loosened in the temple's fall. Thus, though the writer might share in the mistaken view then prevalent of the imminence of the final day, his warning, founded on the supposed signs of it, hits well the peculiar needs of his readers.

Vers. 26—32.—Solemn warning as to the fearful consequences of apostasy.

Vers. 26, 27.—For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for (*ἐκδοχή*, used here only; but *ἐκδέχομαι* is frequent in the New Testament in sense of "expect;" e.g. *supra*, ver. 13). Hence there seems no good ground for disputing, with Alford, the usual rendering, "expectation" of judgment, and fiery indignation (*ἐνδεδειγμένους*), which shall devour the adversaries. The warning passage thus begun closely resembles the former interposed one, ch. vi. 4—9. Both have been similarly misapplied (see notes on ch. vi. 4—9); but

both have the same real meaning, which is further confirmed by comparing them together. The purport of both is the hopelessness of a state of apostasy from the faith after full knowledge and full enjoyment of privilege; both are led up to by cautions against remissness, of which the final issue *might* be such apostasy; both are followed by the expression of a confident hope, founded on past faithfulness, that no such apostasy will really follow. The state contemplated is here expressed by *ἁκουσίως ἁμαρτανόντων*, a phrase which in itself might at first sight seem to support one of the erroneous views of the drift of the passage, viz. that all wilful sin after baptism or grace received is unpardonable. But it is first to be observed that the participle *ἁμαρτανόντων* is not aorist, but present, expressing a persistent habit; also that the whole context is sufficient to denote the kind of sin intended. For (1) the preceding verses have pointed to laxity of allegiance to Christ, which might have further consequences; (2) the illustration of what is meant, adduced in ver. 28 from the Mosaic Law, is (as will appear under that verse) a case of entire apostasy—a sin not to be atoned for by any sacrifice, but visited by “cutting off;” (3) the description in ver. 29 of the sin intended implies total repudiation of Christ. Observe, on *ἁκουσίως*, the contrast to *ἁκουσίως ἁμαρτάνειν* (Lev. iv. 2, 27; v. 15, *al.*), expressive of sins of ignorance or infirmity. Not such sins, but deliberate sin with a high hand, is here intended; and further, for the reasons above given, one of this nature so heinous as to be beyond the reach of sacrifice. From all such considerations it appears that *ἁκουσίως ἁμαρτανόντων* here expresses the same idea as *παρεστότας* (ch. vi. 6) and *ἄποστήναι ἀπὸ Θεοῦ* (*ἔντος* (ch. iii. 12), viz. final obdurate defection from the faith. Further, the previous conditions for the possibility of arriving at such a hopeless state, set forth more at length in vers. 4, 5 of ch. vi., are here shortly expressed by *μετὰ τὸ λαβεῖν τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τῆς ἀληθείας*, which is to be interpreted in the light of the other passage (see note thereon). The consequences of such falling away are differently stated in the two passages. In ch. vi. it was the impossibility of renewal unto repentance; here it is the absence of any further atoning sacrifice; and this in keeping with what has been now proved of the sacrifice of Christ having superseded all others and been “once for all.” The drift is that, if this is deliberately rejected after full knowledge of it, no other is left to have recourse to. Then the immediate mention of “judgment” is in keeping also with the conclusion of ch. ix.

(see note on ch. ix. 27), and is immediately suggested here by *τὴν ἡμέραν* of ver. 25. The fire in which that day is to be revealed is a prominent figure both in the Old Testament and the New; regarded as both an *assaying* and a *consuming* fire (cf. especially 1 Cor. iii. 13—16). The expression, *πῦρ* (*ῥλος* (“zeal, or indignation, of fire”), not only expresses the vehemence of the flame, but also implies the idea of the fire itself being instinct with the Divine wrath or jealousy (as *ῥλος*, equivalent to *πῦρ*, is usually translated when attributed to God), of which it is the symbol (cf. Ps. lxxix. 5, *Ἐκκαυθήσεται ὡς πῦρ ὁ ῥλος μου*: Ezek. xxxviii. 19, *Ὁ ῥλος μου ἐν πυρὶ τῆς ὀργῆς μου*: Zeph. i. 18, *Ἐν πυρὶ ῥλου αὐτοῦ*: and *infra*, ch. xii. 29, “Our God is a consuming fire”). (For *ἰσθεῖν μέλλοντος τοῦ θνεαντίου*, cf. Isa. xxvi. 11, *Ζῆλος λήψεται λαὸν ἀπαίδευτον, καὶ νῦν πῦρ τοῦ θνεαντίου ἔδεται*.)

Ver. 28.—One that hath despised (rather, *set at naught*) Moses' Law dieth without mercy under (i.e. at the word of) two or three witnesses. The reference is to Deut. xvii. 2—7, as shown by the mention of the “two or three witnesses” (ver. 6). The sin there spoken of is that of one who “hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the Lord, in transgressing his covenant, and hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or the moon, or any of the host of heaven.” The significance of this in its bearing on the meaning of *ἁμαρτανόντων* in ver. 26 has been already noted.

Vers. 29, 30.—Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing (*κοινόν*, a word commonly denoting things *unclean*; cf. Mark vii. 2; Acts x. 14, 28; xi. 8; Rom. xiv. 14; and *supra*, ch. ix. 13; and so probably here, meaning more than *common*, i.e. *ordinary* human blood. If vilified by denial of its atoning efficacy, it was relegated into the class of unclean things themselves requiring purification. The word is used in opposition to *ἁγιάσθη*), and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace! It has been already remarked how these very strong expressions (answering to those in ch. vi. 6) further denote the kind of sin intended by *ἁμαρτανόντων* in ver. 26. Three characteristics of it are given: (1) contumelious repudiation of Christ; (2) vilification of his atonement; (3) despite to the Holy Spirit that has been given and enjoyed. Citations from the Old Testament follow, according to the general plan of the Epistle, to show that there is a

terrible as well as a gracious side of the revelation of the God of Israel, and especially (as intimated by the second quotation) that *his own people* may be the objects of his vengeance. For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. Both citations are from Deut. xxxii. 35, 36, the second being introduced also into Ps. cxxxv. 14. The first is remarkable as a combination of the texts of the Hebrew and the LXX., neither being exactly followed. The Hebrew has (A.V.), "To me belongeth vengeance and recompense;" the LXX., *Ἐν ἡμῖν ἐκδικήσεως ἀνταπόδοσιν*. And in the same form as in the text the passage is cited Rom. xii. 19. It may be, in this and some other cases of variation from the LXX., that a text different from ours was used by the New Testament writers. The difference here is quite immaterial with regard to the drift of the quotation.

Ver. 31.—It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. David, when the option was given him, preferred falling into the hand of the Lord to falling into the hand of man (2 Sam. xxiv. 14), trusting in the greatness of his mercies. But the case contemplated here is that of its being "too late to cry for mercy, when it is the time of justice." Fearful (the writer would say) is the thought of being exposed, without possibility of escape or of atonement, to the wrath of the Eternal Righteousness. The inspired author of this Epistle had evidently an awful sense of the Divine wrath against sin, and of man's liability to it without atonement. He felt deeply the contradiction between humanity as it is and its ideal of perfection; and hence the wrath attributed to God in Holy Writ would appear to him as inseparable from a just conception of Divine holiness. For the more ardent the love in the human heart of moral good, by so much the keener is the indignation against moral evil, and the sense of the righteousness of retribution. The existence of such evil at all in the good God's universe is indeed a mystery; but, as long as it is there, we cannot but conceive the face of the holy God as set utterly against it; and so any revelation to us of the Divine nature would be imperfect did it not include the idea which is humanly expressed by such terms as "zeal," "jealousy," "wrath," "vengeance." Hence came the long-felt need of some atonement, to reconcile sinful man to the eternal holiness. This need was expressed of old by the institution of sacrifice, which, however—as is so clearly perceived in this Epistle—could never itself be really efficacious in the spiritual sphere of things. In the atonement of Christ (if

rightly apprehended) is found at last a true satisfaction of this spiritual need. But, man's concurrence being still required, the idea of Divine wrath remains notwithstanding, as operative against such as, in deliberate perversity of free-will, after full knowledge, refuse to be thus reconciled. Hence the awful anticipations of future judgment on some, contained in this Epistle. The nature and duration of the doom to come, on such as remain subject to it, are in these passages left in obscurity. They speak only of *φωσφὸς πυρὸς ἐκείνης*, an undefined expectation of something terrible. It may be observed, however, that, whatever be the force of other Scriptures in which the fire of that day is described as *eternal* and *unquenchable*, here at least the figure of a zeal of fire to devour the adversaries seems in itself to suggest rather utter destruction than perpetual pain.

Vers. 32—39.—As at ch. vi. 9, the tones of solemn warning, founded on a real sense of the possibility of apostasy in some, are now relieved by a better hope. In ch. vi. 9, *et seq.*, the writer expressed his own confidence in his readers on the ground of their conduct in the past; here he reminds them of their conduct by way of confirming their own steadfastness, and this with judgment as well as delicacy; for, as Theodoret remarks on this passage, "nothing so excites to zeal as the remembrance of one's own right doings."

Ver. 32.—But call to mind the former days, in which, after ye were enlightened, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; rather, *conflict of sufferings*. On *παλαιότις* ("enlightened"), cf. ch. vi. 4, and what was said there as to the meaning of the word. Here certainly the context seems naturally to suggest a definite reference to baptism, as marking the date of the commencement of exposure to persecution. But if so, not, of course, so as to exclude the idea of inward spiritual enlightenment. "Hic primus erat ingressus ad Christianismum; baptismus apud idoneos salutare medium. Existimo hæc instituta divina etiam in theoria non tanti aestimari quanti decebat. Apud ipsum baptismum Christi sancta ejus humanitas magnifico illuminata fuit" (Bengel).

Ver. 33.—Partly, being made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, having become partakers with them that were so used. On *θεαυτοποιήτοις* (translated "made a gazing-stock"), cf. 1 Cor. iv. 9, *Θεαυτοποιήθημεν ὡς κλέψαι καὶ ὀργυλλοῖς καὶ ἀσέβητοις*. The figure is drawn from the Roman amphitheatres, where persons doomed to death were exposed to the gaze and the contumely of crowds; and the expression may not be wholly figurative, but denote the actual treatment of Christians, as

expressed by the common cry, "Christianos ad leones!" The phrase, τῶν οὕτως ἀναστρεφόμενων (translated "them that were so used"), might be more correctly rendered (as ἀναστρέφεσθαι is elsewhere), "them that so had their conversation," i.e. manner of life. For the word is not used in a passive sense, but as equivalent to *versari*; cf. Matt. xvii. 22; 2 Cor. i. 12; Eph. ii. 8; ch. xiii. 18; also Gal. i. 18; Eph. iv. 22, etc. (ἀναστρέφειν). The Vulgate has *taliter conversantium*; Wickliffe, "men living so;" Tyndale and Cranmer, "them who so passed their time." But the A.V. may give the meaning with sufficient correctness, the main thought being probably the experience of the persons referred to rather than their demeanour under it.

Ver. 34.—For ye had compassion on those who were in bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing that ye have for yourselves a better possession, and an abiding one. For τοῖς δεσμοῖς, the Receptus has τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου, which the A.V., so as to avoid the impropriety of expressing sympathy with the bonds themselves, renders "me in my bonds." Even apart from manuscript authority, δεσμοῖς is evidently to be preferred, both as suiting the verb *συνεπαθήσατε* and as being more likely to have been altered to the common Pauline expression, δεσμοῖς μου, than *vice versa*, especially on the supposition of the writer being St. Paul himself. Thus no evidence as to the authorship of the Epistle is hence deducible. The allusion is to persecutions of Christians, under which the Hebrews addressed had been plundered, and had succoured others who were prisoners for the faith, as is intimated also in ch. vi. 10. More than one such persecution might be in the writer's view, including, perhaps, that after the stoning of Stephen (Acts viii. 1; xi. 19); that instituted by Herod Agrippa, under which James the elder suffered (Acts xii.); that which led to the martyrdom of James the Just (Josephus, 'Ant.' xx. 9. 1) and others.

Vers. 35, 36.—Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience (or, *endurance*), that, having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise; or, *doing the will of God, ye may receive*, etc. The aorist participle *ωφειλάτε* does not of necessity express priority to the receiving (cf. ch. vi. 15, μακροθυμήσατε ἐπ' ἐλπίς). The meaning is that by endurance in doing the will they would receive. The full and final enjoyment of what is promised is still future and conditioned by perseverance. Observe the difference between the words κομίσεσθαι, here used, and ἐπ' ἐλπίς, used in ch. vi. 15. The former (occ. ch. xi. 19, 39;

also 2 Cor. v. 10; Eph. vi. 8; Col. iii. 25; and 1 Pet. i. 9) means the actual reception of what is denoted, equivalent to *sibi acquirere*; the latter (occ. ch. vi. 15; xi. 33; also Rom. xi. 7; Jas. iv. 2) means only "to attain to," without involving full possession. It is not said of Abraham (ch. vi. 15) that he *ἐκομίσσατο*, only that he *ἐπ' ἐλπίς*. So also of all the faithful of old described in the following chapter (xi. 39). And even to believing Christians, as this verse shows, the κομίσεσθαι is still future and contingent.

Vers. 37, 38.—For yet a little (rather, *very little*) while, and he that cometh will come, and will not tarry. But the just shall live by faith: and if he draw back, my soul hath no pleasure in him. In these verses, after the manner of the Epistle, what is being urged is supported by an Old Testament quotation (Hab. ii. 3, 4), its drift being (1) the certainty, notwithstanding delay, of the fulfilment of the Divine promise; (2) the necessity meanwhile of continuance in faith and perseverance. The quotation serves also as a step of transition (this, too, after the Epistle's manner) to the disquisition on *faith*, which forms the subject of the following chapter. For the prophet speaks of *faith* as what the righteous one is to live by until the Lord come. It was *faith*—a fuller faith—that the Hebrew Christians wanted to preserve them from the faltering of which they showed some signs; and the requirement of *faith* was no new thing—it had been the essential principle of all true religious life from the beginning, and thus is led up to the review which follows of the Old Testament history, showing that this had always been so. The quotation, as usual, is from the LXX., which, in this case as in some others, differs from the Hebrew. But here, as in ver. 29, *supra*, the LXX. is not exactly followed. The writer cites freely, so as to apply the essential meaning of the passage to his purpose. The Prophet Habakkuk (writing probably during the long evil days of Manasseh) had in his immediate view the trials of faith peculiar to his own time—violence and iniquity in Israel, and imminence of judgment at the hands of Chaldean conquerors, under which he had cried, "O Lord, how long?" But he stands upon his watch and sits upon his tower, to look out what the Lord will say to him in answer to his difficulties. And the Lord answered him, and said, "Write the vision, and make it plain upon the tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie [rather, 'but it hasteth to the end, and doth not lie']": though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, and not tarry [or, 'be behindhand']. Behold, his soul

that is lifted up is not upright in him [or, 'behold, his soul is lifted up, it is not upright in him']: but the just shall live by his faith." The drift of this Divine answer, which inspired the song of joyful confidence with which the Book of Habakkuk so beautifully concludes, is, as aforesaid, that, in spite of all appearances, the prophetic vision will ere long be realized; God's promises to the righteous will certainly be fulfilled; and that faith meanwhile must be their sustaining principle. The variations of the LXX. from the Hebrew are: (1) *ἔρχόμενος ἦξει*, instead of "It (i.e. the vision) shall come;" (2) *Ὃν ὑποσπελάττει, οὐκ εἰδοκεῖ ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἐν αὐτῷ*, instead of "Behold, his soul," etc.; (3) *Ὁ δὲ δίκαιος μου ἐκ πίστειος ἵσται* (A), or *Ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστειος μου ἵσται* (B), instead of "The just shall live by his faith." The variations in the Epistle from the LXX. are: (1) *Ἐνι μυχῷ σου σου* (occ. Isa. xxvi. 20), interpolated at the beginning of the quotation; (2) *Ὁ ἐρχόμενος* for *ἔρχόμενος*, so as to denote more distinctly the Messiah who was to come (cf. Matt. x. 3; John vi. 14); here, of course, with a view to his second advent; (3) the reversal of the order of the two concluding clauses, *ὃν ὑποσπελάττει* and *ὁ δὲ δίκαιος*: (4) in the Textus Receptus the omission of

μου after either *δίκαιος* or *πίστειος* (as the same text is cited by St. Paul, Rom. i. 17 and Gal. iii. 11). There is, however, good authority for reading it here after *δίκαιος* (equivalent to "my Righteous One"). None of these variations from the LXX. affect the meaning of the passage, being only such as to point more clearly the intended application. One of the variations of the LXX. from the Hebrew (*ὃν ὑποσπελάττει*, etc.) does alter the meaning of that particular clause, though not the general purport of the whole passage. The adoption here of the LXX. reading, and still more the fact that the following verse depends upon this reading, is among the strong evidences of the Epistle having been originally written, not in Hebrew, but in Greek.

Ver. 39.—But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe unto the saving of the soul; literally, *not of the drawing back unto . . . but of faith unto*, etc. Thus, once more before proceeding to the subject now before him, the writer is careful to disclaim any real expectation of defection in his readers, and with delicacy he includes himself with them by his use of the nominative plural.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—18.—*Close of the argument.* This concluding passage presents little more than a re-statement of some points which have been already marked in the discussion which occupies the three preceding chapters. The kernel-thought of the paragraph is expressed in ver. 9: "He taketh away the first" (the Jewish sacrifices), "that he may establish the second" (redemption by the sacrifice of himself).

I. THE INHERENT WORTHLESSNESS OF THE LEVITICAL SACRIFICES. (Vers. 1—4.) Although these availed to remove ceremonial uncleanness, and were the appointed types of the offering of Christ, they were literally useless in relation to the highest ends of sacrifice. The apostle notes three points. 1. *The Levitical offerings were inadequate even as representations of the true Sacrifice.* (Ver. 1.) The entire Jewish ceremonial—tabernacle, priest, victim—was "a shadow" of the coming blessings of the gospel dispensation. But it was "not the very image of the things;" it presented only a rude and incomplete sketch of the great facts and doctrines of Christianity. Take one point as an example. The victims under the Law were dragged unwillingly to the altar;—how inaccurate this feature as compared with the loving obedience and the voluntary self-sacrifice of the Lord Jesus! 2. *They were of no use whatever for the removal of guilt.* The necessity constantly to repeat them showed this (vers. 1, 2). And so did the nature of the sacrifices themselves. Our reason readily assents to the declaration (ver. 4) that the blood of beasts can never expiate the sins of men. Brute nature is incapable of spiritual suffering. Animal sacrifices could not adequately reflect God's hatred of sin. They could not vindicate his justice, or recompense his Law. Such blood has no virtue to pacify the conscience, or to purify the soul. 3. *Their influence went to perpetuate the remembrance of sins.* (Ver. 8.) The divinely appointed repetition of the Levitical sacrifices showed that God could not accept them as a real atonement, and therefore could not forget the offences of the worshippers. It was intended also to press home upon the consciences of the people the thought of the accumulated arrears of unexpiated sin.

II. THE INHERENT VALUE OF THE SATISFACTION OF CHRIST. (Vers. 5—18.) Through-

out these verses two passages are cited from the Old Testament, to illustrate the contrast between the legal offerings and the atonement of the Lord Jesus. The infinite merit of his sacrifice is conspicuous, whatever the aspect in which it is viewed. 1. *Christ's satisfaction has shown that obedience is the true sacrifice.* (Vers. 5—9.) To illustrate this point the writer quotes from a Messianic psalm (Ps. xl. 6—8). God "delights not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats." The legal sacrifices were useful only as types of the sacrifice of Christ, and his blood is the symbol of his own perfect obedience as our Substitute. His sacrifice of himself was the offering of an obedient will. He was "obedient unto death." The "ears" which God had pierced for him (Ps. xl. 6) were ever swift to hear the Divine commands, and the "body" which he had prepared for him (Heb. x. 5) readily submitted itself to the Divine will. In coming to the world, and in dying for man's redemption, Jesus was "doing the will" of his Father. His voluntary "obedience unto death" has swept away for ever the Levitical sin offerings, and his people can now serve God acceptably only by sprinkling themselves with his blood, and then "presenting their bodies a living sacrifice." 2. *Christ's satisfaction has accomplished the removal of guilt.* (Vers. 10—14.) His people are "sanctified" i.e. cleansed from guilt, "through the offering of his body once for all." The Aaronical priests always stood at their work; they never sat down in the tabernacle. Indeed, no seats were provided for them there. Their constant standing was suggestive of the fact that the ever-repeated sacrifices were of no avail for the pardon of transgression. But our high Priest, after his one offering of himself as a sacrificial Victim, sat down in the most honourable place of the heavenly holy of holies, and still continues to sit there. His very attitude shows that he has fully accomplished the end contemplated by his sacrifice. His completed atonement, besides being the purchase of his mediatorial royalty and the pledge of his final victory over his enemies, has also "perfected" his people "for ever" as regards their justification. 3. *Christ's satisfaction takes away the remembrance of sin.* (Vers. 15—18.) The Prophet Jeremiah, in his oracle about the new covenant, had predicted this (Jer. xxxi. 34). After the sacrifice of Calvary, there would be no more need for the annual expiatory rite on the Day of Atonement—a ceremony which, in fact, had only served to bring sins to remembrance. Now that the great redemption has been accomplished, the iniquities of the believer are really swept away and put an end to. God blots them out. He casts them behind his back. He makes them as though they had never been. And this obliteration evinces the absolute perfection of the atonement, and certifies the abolition of the Hebrew sacrifices.

Vers. 19—25.—*The great admonition.* Having completed his elaborate argument, and concluded the doctrinal part of the treatise, the author warmly exhorts the Hebrews to maintain their Christian steadfastness. The appeal contained in these verses collects into a focus of intense light and heat the main teaching of this weighty book. The paragraph before us may be regarded as the centre of gravity of the Epistle. It is also the key-note of the impressive representations and the loving counsels which occupy the remaining pages.

I. *THE BELIEVER'S PRIVILEGES.* (Vers. 19—21.) The word "therefore" introduces a brief summary of what precedes in the long section devoted to the priesthood of Christ (ch. iv. 14—x. 18). The grand substantive blessing of the gospel is that of access to God; and this has been secured in connection with: 1. *An accepted Sacrifice.* (Ver. 19.) Ch. x. 1—18 treats of this. Jesus has gone into heaven with his own blood, and has been allowed to sprinkle it upon the mercy-seat. His blood has expiated the sins which debarred men from standing in the Divine presence. Washed in it, the penitent sinner may draw near to God with confidence. 2. *An opened sanctuary.* (Vers. 19, 20.) Ch. ix. discusses this branch of the subject. Christians are admitted into a far nobler holy of holies than that from which ancient Israel were excluded. "A new and living way" to the Father has been opened up by Jesus; and it shall always be "new," because, in fact, the "living" Saviour is himself the Way. The breaking of his body upon the cross was like the rending of "the veil," for it opened up the mercy-seat to man. 3. *A glorious Intercessor.* (Ver. 21.) Ch. vii. treats of the might and majesty of this "great Priest." Through the merit of Christ's blood the believer takes his place immediately in front of the throne; and then, through the

mediation of the Saviour, who stands by his side, he is graciously maintained in this position.

“Holiness on the head,
Light and perfections on the breast,
Harmonious bells below, raising the dead
To lead them unto life and rest :
Thus are true Aarons drest.

“Christ is my only Head,
My alone only Heart and Breast,
My only Music, striking me ev’n dead ;
That to the old man I may rest,
And be in him new drest.”

(George Herbert.)

II. THE DUTIES WHICH REST UPON THOSE PRIVILEGES. (Vers. 22—25.) These are three in number, each being introduced with the words, “Let us.” They deal with our conduct towards God, towards the world, and towards the Church. Observance of them calls into exercise respectively the three great graces of the Pauline theology, the duties being those of *faith* toward God, *hope* exhibited before the world, and *love* to our fellow-believers. 1. *The duty of Divine worship.* (Ver. 22.) Worship is the movement of the soul towards God. To “draw near” includes every form which it is possible for acceptable religious service to assume. The apostle, taking for granted that his readers appreciate the inestimable value of communion with God, indicates briefly the qualifications and features of acceptable worship. (1) *Sincerity.* “With a true heart.” Our devotion must not be feigned. We must not be hypocrites, or formalists, or sacramentarians. We “must worship in spirit and in truth.” (2) *Confidence.* “In fulness of faith.” Our faith in the way of access must be entire and absolute. The apostle does not speak here of assurance of one’s own personal salvation. What he insists upon is, that true faith cannot admit of any doubt as to its object—that object being the atonement of Christ, and his priestly work within the opened sanctuary of heaven. (3) *A pacified conscience.* “Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.” When the Aaronical priests were installed their garments were sprinkled with blood, in token of their acceptance as ministers of the sanctuary; so the blood of Christ, while it satisfies Divine justice, satisfies also the conscience to which it is applied, delivers the soul from the sting of sin, and qualifies for the service of God. (4) *A purified heart.* “And our body washed with pure water.” A brazen vessel, called the laver, which was used for the ablutions of the priests, stood in the outer court between the altar and the door of the tabernacle. So, hard by the entrance of life, stands the baptismal font; and the beginning of the Christian career is for the soul to be washed in the laver of regeneration. It is the “pure in heart” who “shall see God.” 2. *The duty of public confession.* (Ver. 23.) It is not enough that we cherish deep religious convictions, and that we maintain a constant commerce with God in acts of secret prayer. We must acknowledge our Christian hope before men—with our lips and by our lives, and in the observance of the public ordinances of grace. We must not be ashamed to manifest profound spiritual earnestness, even in the presence of a persecuting world. To confess our hope will strengthen it. To refuse to acknowledge Christ is to deny him. And our confession ought to be a consistent “Yea.” We are unfaithful if we allow it to sway to and fro, even although it should expose us to obloquy and danger. Seeing that our hope is grounded upon the sure promises of our Father God, why should not our acknowledgment of the truth be always explicit and consistent? 3. *The duty of Christian fellowship.* (Vers. 24, 25.) Brotherly love should prevail among believers as brethren in Christ. Especially should those who are connected with the same congregation cherish a kindly and affectionate interest in one another. Our Church-membership is not maintained merely for one’s own personal edification. We should “consider one another” in the spirit of brotherly love, and so that we may be mutually helpful to each other in the Divine life. We are to take kindly thought of each other’s excellences and defects, needs and dangers, trials and temptations, and to minister aid to one another accordingly. And in so far as we realize the bonds of love and sympathy which unite us to our Christian brethren, will we prize such

opportunities of intercourse with them as the meetings of the Church afford. One great purpose of our "assembling of ourselves together" is to provide occasions for Christian conference and mutual exhortation. It was peculiarly necessary just now that the Hebrew believers should incite one another "unto love and good works," for "the day" of the destruction of Jerusalem and the final collapse of the Levitical system was fast "drawing nigh." That event is now past, but another and more tremendous "day of the Lord" is still to come. We ought as Christians to "consider" and "exhort" one another in view of "that great and notable day" on which Christ shall come to be our Judge, and to describe with his sceptre the eternal boundaries of being and destiny.

Vers. 26—31.—*The guilt and doom of apostasy.* This is a terrible passage even to read. It is fitted to fill with alarm the hearts of those who refuse to "draw near" to God, or confess his Name, or hold communion with his people. It is introduced here, like the similar warning in ch. vi. 4—8, as a motive to Christian steadfastness.

I. *THE GUILT OF APOSTASY.* This tremendous sin is described: 1. *Generally.* (Ver. 26.) The context shows that to "sin wilfully" refers neither to any isolated act of apostasy, nor to any other peculiarly heinous transgression, but to the specific sin of finally abandoning Christianity. The question here is not about the destiny of the millions of heathendom, who have never heard the gospel. The Bible does not encourage curiosity regarding them. The sin spoken of is that of the man who had "received the knowledge of the truth," and who has rejected the gospel after having perceived its beauty, realized its suitableness, and in some degree experienced its power. 2. *More particularly.* (Ver. 29.) Saving knowledge centres in the revelation of the three Persons of the Godhead, who are seen in the gospel working together to accomplish our redemption. So the apostate is described by his conduct towards each. (1) *Towards the Father.* He "hath trodden underfoot the Son of God." We can know and approach the Father only through the Son; and, therefore, "whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" (1 John ii. 23). (2) *Towards the Saviour.* The apostate tramples upon him, and "counts his blood an unholy thing." The blood of Jesus must be either on the heart or under the heel. But the apostate persistently despises the new covenant. He treats its Divine Mediator as if he were a malefactor. He treads underfoot the precious cleansing blood, as if it were worthless and unclean. (3) *Towards the Spirit.* He "hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace." To act thus is to deny to the Holy Ghost the reverence and adoration which are his due. It is obstinately and maliciously to reject him. It is to treat him with contempt, and thereby "grieve" him away for ever from the soul. Persistently to despise the Spirit of God is to commit the unpardonable sin.

II. *THE DOOM OF APOSTASY.* An awful punishment shall descend upon those who sin away their souls, after rejoicing for a season in the light and love of Christ. The fearful penalty of their guilt is represented here in different aspects. 1. *Negatively.* (Ver. 26.) "There remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins." Those Hebrews, in professing Christianity, had renounced the Levitical sacrifices. But, should they now reject the propitiation of Christ—the only possible means by which God's justice can be satisfied and man's guilt cancelled—what would such rejection entail? It would follow, first of all, that the guilt of their ordinary sins against the Divine Law would remain unpardoned, and that even on that ground they must certainly perish. 2. *Positively.* (Ver. 27.) It would also follow that the guilt of their special sin of apostasy would bring upon them a heavier penalty than that which shall overtake the other "adversaries" of God. This tremendous sin may fill the soul even here with a horror of great darkness. It may destroy happiness by causing scorpion stings of conscience. It may cover the horizon of life with vague anticipations of a terrible eternity. And, whether such anticipations be present or not, there remains the devouring "fierceness of fire" itself. Not elemental fire, indeed; but spiritual loss, final reprobation, eternal despair. The apostate shall be shut out for ever from the presence of God, and such exclusion is itself the hell of hell. 3. *Comparatively.* (Vers. 28, 29.) Under the Mosaic Law any Jew who lapsed into idolatry was to be stoned to death, for "transgressing God's covenant;" and this stern doom was admitted to be just (Deut. xvii. 2—7). But, asks the apostle, are not apostates from Christianity guilty of a vastly greater sin? and shall they not receive a much more dreadful punishment? He refers

the matter to the judgment and conscience of his readers. To reject the gospel is a more heinous crime than to set at nought the Law. To tread underfoot the eternal Son of God involves more aggravated guilt than to turn away from Moses, who was a merely human messenger. So, if the sentence of death for rejecting the old covenant was a righteous arrangement, it is evident that the Divine justice must demand a retribution still more awful for the more terrible sin of apostasy from the new covenant.

III. AN ASSERTION OF THE MAJESTY OF GOD'S JUSTICE. (Vers. 30, 31.) "We know him." The gospel itself has revealed to us his infinite power, his inflexible justice, his spotless holiness, his absolute faithfulness. We know that he has said, "Vengeance belongeth unto me," and "The Lord shall judge his people" (Deut. xxxii. 35, 36). We know his prerogative as the Governor of the universe. We know that the principle of retribution belongs to his moral nature. And we know that he defends and saves his people by punishing their enemies. Our nineteenth century, no less than the first century, stands greatly in need of faithful teaching on the subject of retribution, both as a principle of moral law and as a doctrine of Christianity. For: 1. The spirit of the time tempts everywhere to a life of self-indulgence, rather than to the Christian life of self-denial. And habits of self-pleasing tend to bring a man to the edge of the inclined plane which slopes towards the abyss of apostasy. "He that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." 2. The spirit of the time tempts even true believers to misconceive the nature of the Christian life. Many speak as if after their conversion they should have no experience whatever of spiritual unrest. They forget that it is not "the primrose way" that leads to glory; and that, while the new life begins with an Eden and ends with heaven, "the great tribulation" comes between. The passage before us, in warning of the apostate's sin and doom, reminds us of the difficulties of the Christian life. 3. The spirit of the time labours to thrust into the background the doctrine of retributive justice. But this great principle is found everywhere: in nature, in providence, in history, in systems of civil government, in the human mind and conscience, in the spiritual experience of believers, and in the inspired Word of God. The justice of the Almighty is asserted here, as elsewhere in the New Testament, with peculiar emphasis. Those religious teachers, therefore, incur a terrible responsibility who try to persuade their fellow-sinners that it is by no means such "a fearful thing" after all "to fall into the hands of the living God." The Lord Jesus Christ has not sent any such message. Rather, he has solemnly warned us to "fear him" (Luke xii. 5). And, if men do not fear the living God, whom will they fear?

Vers. 32—39.—*Persuasives to steadfastness.* The latter part of this chapter, beginning with ver. 26, is written in the same strain as ch. vi. 4—20. In both passages a strong denunciatory warning is followed by a tender exhortation, expressive of the writer's fond hope that the Hebrew Christians will "stand fast in the Lord." The pathetic appeal contained in the verses before us is based upon three grounds, belonging respectively to the past, the future, and the present.

I. AN APPEAL TO CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. (Vers. 32—35.) The apostle would have his readers remember their first love, in the days when they became "light in the Lord." They had at that time endured persecution bravely. After the death of Stephen (Acts viii. 1), in the time of Herod Agrippa (Acts xii. 1—19), at Thessalonica (1 Thess. ii. 14), at Rome (Rom. xii. 12, 14), and elsewhere, the Hebrew believers had encountered the fierce opposition of their unbelieving countrymen and of the Roman authorities. Their calamities had been such as to make them a public spectacle. They had suffered: 1. In their *character*, which was assailed with malignant scorn. 2. In their *persons*, for they were subjected to bodily torture. 3. In their *property*. They were unjustly deprived of their possessions. Yet they bore the loss cheerfully, being persuaded that their true and permanent treasure was in heaven. 4. By reason of their practical *sympathy* with one another. They had brought to their persecuted and imprisoned brethren both sympathetic condolence and practical help. Now, the apostle reminds the Hebrews of these courageous endurances, in order to stimulate them still to sustain their Christian valour. They had not allowed their early conflicts to dim their spiritual joy. They had run well hitherto; what should hinder them now from persevering to the end? Why allow all their past toils and trials to count for nothing?

II. AN APPEAL TO CHRISTIAN HOPE. (Vers. 35—37.) This hope is presented in a

twofold aspect. 1. *The hope of the promised reward.* (Vers. 35, 36.) There is a Christian doctrine of recompense. All the apostles speak of it in their Epistles under one form or another. No Christian, of course, can claim any reward of legal right. It is the gracious gift of the God of grace. But every steadfast believer obtains it even here on earth; for holiness is its own immediate recompense. And he shall receive it in eternal reversion hereafter; for his shall be the inconceivable peace and purity, and the inexhaustible joy and glory, of heaven. 2. *The hope of Christ's second coming.* (Ver. 37.) The apostle here employs as the vehicle of his thoughts the words given to Habakkuk by which a former generation of Hebrews had been encouraged to wait for the humiliation of their Chaldean oppressors (Hab. ii. 8). But the scope of the passage requires that we refer the "coming" here spoken of to our Lord's second advent. As compared with the endless ages of eternity, during which his people are to enjoy the "great recompense of reward," the interval which must elapse before his personal return to the world may well be described as "a very little while." The apostles always exhibit the second coming of Christ as an impending event, for which the believer is to yearn and to make ready. Death is only a parenthesis. Our duty is not so much to prepare to die, as to cherish "the blessed hope." From the watch-tower of prayer let us look out for the signs of his appearing; and thus we shall forget our trials, and maintain our steadfastness.

"Beyond the smiling and the weeping,
Beyond the waking and the sleeping,
Beyond the sowing and the reaping,
Love, rest, and home!
Sweet hope!
Lord, tarry not, but come!"

III. AN APPEAL TO CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE. (Vers. 38, 39.) The apostle, in concluding with an expression of confidence in his readers, continues to borrow the words of Habakkuk (ii. 4). He thus reminds them that under every dispensation faith has been the instrument of salvation. This great saying, "The just shall live by faith," has become historical. In the time of Habakkuk it marked off the worship of Jehovah from heathenism; in the apostolic age (Rom. i. 17; Gal. iii. 11) it distinguished the pure gospel from legalism; at the Reformation it served to divide scriptural Christianity from Romanism. These six words were to Martin Luther the golden text of the Bible. They sounded within his soul, first, as he sat in his quiet cell at Wittenberg; a second time during his illness at Bologna; and again at Rome, when he was climbing up Pilate's staircase upon his knees. It was in connection with Luther's perception of the meaning of this text that the great idea of the Reformation began to possess his soul. What, then, is the force of this saying of Habakkuk? Clearly it is not to be restricted to the first act of faith; the statement refers to the entire life of the believer. Although justified by faith at the beginning, his justification is continued by means of his perseverance in living faith to the end of his earthly course. The whole list of godly achievements referred to in ch. xi. illustrates how faith is the foundation of a life of holy obedience and of spiritual triumph. The apostle, therefore, reminds his readers that they must persistently "do the will of God" if they would keep themselves from backsliding unto perdition. Only a life of continued faith will secure "the saving of the soul." Union to Christ, justification, participation in Christ's life, peace of conscience, sanctification, the certainty of final redemption from all evil,—these, and every other Christian experience, are the effect of sustained and habitual faith. It is faith alone which brings us to the Fountain of life, and keeps us there.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 5—10.—*The imperfect sacrifices and the perfect Sacrifice.* "Wherefore when he cometh into the world," etc.

I. THE IMPERFECT SACRIFICES. The imperfection of the legal sacrifices has been exhibited already with considerable fulness. In the preceding verses of this chapter it is pointed out that they were mere shadows of the true Sacrifice; they could not cleanse

the offerers, or take away their sins. Another aspect of this imperfection is brought into view in our text. These sacrifices are spoken of as unacceptable to God. "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not; . . . sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sins thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; the which are offered according to the Law." How are we to understand this? Were not these sacrifices and offerings instituted by him? When the Divine intention in them was realized, and they were offered in the true spirit, they were, undoubtedly, acceptable to him. When the sin offering was the manifestation of the offerer's penitence for sin and desire for forgiveness; when the burnt offering symbolized the self-consecration of the offerer to God, and the meat offering was the spontaneous tribute of a thankful heart to the Giver of all good, then they were well pleasing to God. But when they were offered as though the offering of them were meritorious on the part of the offerers, or as substitutes for personal obedience and service, they were not acceptable unto God. This is the aspect in which they are introduced in our text—the offering of sacrifices as contrasted with the rendering of willing obedience to the will of God. He has explicitly and repeatedly declared in the Scriptures that such sacrifices he will not accept (cf. 1 Sam. xv. 22; Ps. l. 8—14; li. 16—19; Prov. xxi. 3; Isa. i. 11—17; Jer. vii. 21—23; Hos. vi. 6; Micah vi. 6—8; Matt. ix. 13; Mark xii. 33). The principle is applicable still. God will not accept our professions, praises, prayers, or gifts as substitutes for faith, love, obedience, and self-consecration.

II. THE PERFECT SACRIFICE. "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith," etc. The perfection of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is here seen in several particulars.

1. *It originated with God the Father.* "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body didst thou prepare for me. . . . He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second." Not only the sacrifice of the Christ, but his whole mission, was the outworking of the counsel and plan of God. The Saviour himself was the great Gift of the heavenly Father to our lost world. All our blessings flow from the throne of God.

2. *It expresses the most perfect obedience.* (1) Obedience in the highest spirit. With perfect voluntariness our Lord did the will of God the Father. Freely he entered upon and fulfilled his great redemptive mission. "Then said I, Lo, I am come to do thy will, O God." More forcibly is this aspect of Christ's work expressed in the psalm from which our text is quoted: "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy Law is within my heart." "Jesus saith, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." He found deepest and purest joy in doing the holy will of God. His own will, his entire being, was in beautiful and blessed accord with the will of his Father. His obedience was not in word and action only, but in thought, feeling, and volition. In the sight of God the obedience of a moral being is never true except it be voluntary. (2) Obedience in the fullest extent. Our Lord "fulfilled all righteousness." But did his obedience include suffering and sacrifice? Our text returns a decisive reply. "A body didst thou prepare for me. I am come to do thy will, O God. In which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." The will of the Father included the suffering and death of the Son as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. On this point the testimony of the sacred Scriptures is clear and conclusive. "The Son of man came to give his life a Ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28; see also Matt. xxvi. 39, 42; Luke xxiv. 28, 27, 44—47). He was "obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross." But even here it was not the intensity of the sufferings which made the sacrifice acceptable unto God, but the piety of the spirit in which they were endured. The sacrifice was perfect because it was offered in the fulfilment of the will of the Father. "It is monstrous to suppose," said Dr. Robert Vaughan, "that the Deity could be pleased with mere suffering. It is the spiritual essence in the atonement that makes it to be what it is to us. It may be accepted as certain, that in the gift of the Son of God we have the brightest manifestation of the love of the Father; and that in the willing humiliation and grief of the Redeemer we have the tenderest revelation of pity towards the evil and unthankful, and at the same time the noblest act of worship ever rendered to the good and the holy. In this sense it is truly by the sorrows, the death, the cross of Christ, that we have salvation. It has been his will to become thus acquainted with grief, and to die—to die the death of the cross—that we might be saved." The perfection of the

Saviour's sacrifice was in the voluntary and entire surrender of himself to God. 3. *It accomplishes its Divine design.* "In the which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Ebrard interprets sanctification here as involving "both justification and sanctification." But the use of the perfect participle, "we have been sanctified," expresses not our subjective sanctification, but our objective reception into true relationship to God, and into the actual fellowship of the members of the people of God as 'the saints' (ch. vi. 10)" (Lange). By his one great offering of himself our Lord has provided all that man needs for the forgiveness of his sins, for his acceptance with God, and for the purifying and perfecting of his being. Christ's work is finished and perfect. To it nothing can be added; in it no improvement can be made. Man's great business in relation to it is to accept of it, and become perfected (ver. 14) through it.—W. J.

Vers. 12, 13.—*The sacrifice and sovereignty of Christ.* "But this Man, after he had offered one sacrifice," etc.

I. THE SACRIFICE OFFERED BY CHRIST. 1. *Self-sacrifice.* The Jewish priests offered goats, lambs, etc. But Jesus Christ "gave himself." The whole of his life upon earth was a sacrifice. The sufferings of the closing scenes were sacrificial. His death was sacrificial. In all he acted with entire spontaneity (John x. 17, 18). All was the outcome of the infinite love wherewith he loved us. It is of the very nature of love to sacrifice self for the beloved. No sacrifice is so Divine as that of self. "Greater love hath no man than this," etc. (John xv. 13). 2. *Self-sacrifice for sin.* The death of Jesus was neither (1) a mere martyrdom; nor (2) an offering to pacify the wrath of God; but (3) it was a "sacrifice for sins." "He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." "Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous," etc. 3. *Self-sacrifice for sin of perpetual efficacy.* "He offered one sacrifice for sins for ever." Christ's sacrifice was offered once for all. It needs no repetition. It is completely efficacious for all sins of all men for ever (cf. ch. ix. 25—28). It seems to us that to speak of "offering Christ upon the altar" in the Lord's Supper is utterly unscriptural, and a reflection on the sufficiency of the "one sacrifice for sins for ever" which our Lord offered.

II. THE POSITION OCCUPIED BY CHRIST. "Sat down on the right hand of God." This position is suggestive of: 1. *Rest.* The sitting down is opposed to the standing of the preceding verse. Christ's sacrificial work is completed. The sufferings of his earthly life are over for ever. The toil and conflict are all past. He has finished the work that was given him to do (cf. ch. i. 3). 2. *Honour.* "The right hand" is the position of honour. He is "crowned with glory and honour" (ch. ii. 9; cf. Phil. ii. 6—11). The glory of redemption is his. 3. *His exaltation is a guarantee that all who are one with him in sacrifice shall be one with him in sovereignty.* There is a cross for each of his disciples; there is also a crown for every one who faithfully bears that cross (cf. Matt. xvi. 24; John xii. 26; Rom. viii. 17; Rev. iii. 21).

III. THE EXPECTATION ENTERTAINED BY CHRIST. "From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made the footstool of his feet." The foes of our Lord are rebellious angels and rebellious men. All persons and all things which are opposed to his character and sovereignty are his enemies. Ignorance, the darkness of the mind, is opposed to him as "the Light" and "the Truth." Tyranny is opposed to him as the great Emancipator. He proclaimed the universal brotherhood of men. Sin is opposed to him as the Saviour and the Sovereign of men. Death is opposed to him as the Life and the Lifegiver. All these he will completely and for ever vanquish. "He must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet." Let us endeavour to realize the certainty of this. 1. *History points to it.* During nearly nineteen centuries the spirit and the principles of Christ have been advancing and gaining strength in the world. Tyrannical despotisms passing away; free governments spreading; slavery losing its place and power; liberty and the recognition of human brotherhood constantly growing; cruelties and oppressions ever decreasing; Christian charities and generousities ever increasing; the night of ignorance receding; the day of intelligence advancing and brightening. The past is prophetic of the complete triumph of Christ. 2. *The spirit of the age points to it.* There is much of evil in the age; but there are also many good and hope-inspiring things. The age is one of broadening freedom,

earnest inquiry, growing intelligence, and many and ever-increasing charities. All these are in harmony with Christianity, results of Christianity; and as men advance in them they will be the more fitted and disposed to embrace Christianity. 3. *God's Word assures it.* (See Ps. ii. 8; lxxii. 8—17; Dan. vii. 13, 14.) 4. *Christ is waiting for it.* "From henceforth expecting"—implying his undoubted assurance of it. He cannot be disappointed.—W. J.

Vers. 18.—*Complete forgiveness through the perfect Sacrifice.* "Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." Our text authorizes three observations.

I. THAT THE SAVIOUR'S SACRIFICE FOR SIN WAS PERFECT. This is implied in the text. It is stated more than once in the preceding argument. To prove it was one of the great objects of the doctrinal portion of this letter. It has already come under our notice in several of our homilies (see on ch. vii. 26—28; ix. 11, 12; ix. 13, 14; x. 5—10).

II. THAT THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN THROUGH THE SAVIOUR'S SACRIFICE IS COMPLETE. This completeness is exhibited by the writer: 1. *By comparing it with the partial putting away of sins obtained through the legal sacrifices.* "Sacrifices which can never take away sins" (ver. 11). The word employed here signifies "to take clean away" (cf. Acts xxvii. 20), i.e. to put off like the garment which clings to the person, or the ring on the finger; as, for instance, the besetting sin of xii. 1, or the besetting infirmity of ver. 3. The sacred writer does not mean to say that sins were not forgiven to sacrificial worshippers under the Law; but that the legal sacrifices had no inward spiritual power to give peace to the conscience, or any assured sense of pardon, purity to the heart, or any really new beginning of spiritual life (ch. ix. 9). With these in their subject-matter and their inadequacy, ever similar and oft-repeated sacrifices, he contrasts (ver. 12) the 'one sacrifice for sins' of Jesus Christ, which is no other than himself" (Delitzsch). And Alford, "The (legal) sacrifice might bring sense of partial forgiveness; but it could never denude the offerer of sinfulness—strip off and take away his guilt." But through the sacrifice of the Christ sin is really taken away. He who heartily believes in him is reconciled unto God, receives absolute and full forgiveness of sins, and is inspired by a new and holy affection, even supreme love to God. And this affection is the mightiest antagonist of sin. He who is inspired by it is not overcome of evil, but overcomes evil with good. 2. *By the expressions which are used to set it forth.* "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (see our remarks on ch. viii. 12). Here is the greatest encouragement to sinners to seek forgiveness from God. "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. With the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption." "Let the wicked forsake his way," etc. (Isa. lv. 7).

III. THAT THE SAVIOUR'S SACRIFICE WILL NEVER BE REPEATED. "Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." Being perfect in itself and in its efficacy, his sacrifice needs no repetition (see remarks on this in our homilies on ch. vii. 26—28; ix. 27, 28; x. 5—10).

Learn the folly of looking for other and more effective means of salvation. The grandest and most convincing proof of the love that God hath to us has been given in the sacrifice of Christ. No greater sacrifice, no more constraining influence, is possible. Let us accept the perfect Sacrifice, and the all-sufficient Saviour.—W. J.

Vers. 19—22.—*The Christian's access to the holy place.* "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into," etc. Here the sacred writer enters upon the last great division of the Epistle. Having closed the argumentative portion, he opens the hortatory and admonitory part of his work. Our text is an exhortation to avail ourselves of the great privilege of access to the presence of God through the blood of Jesus. We have—

I. A DECLARATION OF CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGE. 1. *What the privilege is in itself.* It is twofold. (1) The right of approach unto the presence of God. We may "enter into the holy place." There is a reference here to the entrance of the high priest into the holy of holies under the Mosaic economy. The holy place in the text is the Divine sanctuary, "the place of God's essential presence." We have the privilege of access into his presence. We have this at present in prayer. Even now in prayer, and spiritually, we may "reach the inmost recesses of the Divine

sanctuary, the very heart of God." And we may do this without the intervention of any human priesthood, or the presentation of any material sacrifice. Hereafter we may enter into his presence in person. Already our Lord is there. And he prayed for his disciples, "Father, I will that where I am, they also may be with me." Admission into the manifested presence of God is the exalted privilege awaiting every true Christian in the future. "We shall see him even as he is," "I will behold thy face in righteousness," etc. "In thy presence is fulness of joy," etc. (2) Confidence in approaching the presence of God. We have "boldness to enter into the holy place." This boldness is not rashness, or irreverence, or unreverence. It is rather a holy freedom of access to God because of our assurance that we shall be graciously received by him. See this in the exercise of prayer. We may freely express our wants and wishes to our heavenly Father; for, being our Father, he will not resent our filial confidence, but will welcome us the more because of it. 2. *How the privilege has been obtained for us.* "By the blood of Jesus." It is by the sacrifice of Christ that we have the right of access to the presence of God. And it is by the infinite love of God manifested in that sacrifice that we have confidence in availing ourselves of this right. In a word, this great privilege has been obtained for us through the mediation of our Lord and Saviour. This is here represented as a way: "By the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way," etc. The description is instructive. (1) The characteristics of the way. It is a *new* way; i.e. newly made, recent, or newly opened. Truly and beautifully Stier says, "No believer under the Old Testament dared or could, though under a dispensation of preparatory grace, approach God so freely and openly, so fearlessly and joyfully, so closely and intimately, as we now, who come to the Father by the blood of Jesus, his Son." It is a *living* way. "The way into the sanctuary of the Old Testament was simply a lifeless pavement trodden by the high priest, and by him alone; the way opened by Jesus Christ is one that really leads and carries all who enter it into the heavenly rest, being, in fact, the reconciliation of mankind with God, once and for ever effected by him through his ascension to the Father—a living way," because one with the living person and abiding work of Jesus Christ" (Delitzsch). "Jesus saith, I am the Way," etc. (cf. John xiv. 1—6). (2) The inauguration of this way. "Which he dedicated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." There is a comparison between the flesh of our Saviour and the veil which separated the most holy from the holy place. "While he was with us here below," says Delitzsch, "the weak, limit-bound, and mortal flesh, which he had assumed for our sakes, hung like a curtain between him and the Divine sanctuary into which he would enter; and in order to such entrance, this curtain had to be withdrawn by death, even as the high priest had to draw aside the temple veil in order to make his entry to the holy of holies." In his death our Lord put off the weak, mortal flesh; and at his death "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom," laying open the holy of holies. Dying, our Lord laid aside those conditions of body which could not be taken into heaven itself, and removed the barriers which kept us from God (cf. Col. i. 21, 22). (3) The encouragement to tread this way. "And having a great Priest over the house of God." The description is suggestive. "A great Priest." One who is both Priest and King; "a royal Priest and priestly King." He is "over the house of God," i.e. the Church; the one great communion of saints both in heaven and upon earth; the Church triumphant above and the Church militant below. Here is encouragement to tread the new and living way. Our great Priest has trod the way before us. He has entered the heavenly sanctuary, and abides in the glorious and blessed Presence. He is there on our behalf; as our Representative, as our Forerunner, and as an attraction to draw his people thither also.

II. AN EXHORTATION TO AVAIL OURSELVES OF THIS PRIVILEGE. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith," etc. Consider how we are to avail ourselves of this privilege. 1. *With perfect sincerity.* "With a true heart." A heart free from hypocrisy and from self-deception. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." 2. *With assured confidence.* "In full assurance of faith." Not questioning our right of access, or the certainty of our gracious acceptance, through Christ. Not with divided confidence, but "in fulness of faith" in Christ. The full undivided faith is required, as Ebrard says, "not a faith such as the readers of the

Epistle to the Hebrews had, who to the questions, 'Is Jesus the Messiah? Is he the Son of God?' replied in the affirmative indeed with head and mouth, but yet were not satisfied with the sacrifice of Christ, but thought it necessary still to lean on the crutches of the Levitical sacrifices, and on these crutches would limp into heaven." We fear that there is much of this divided faith at present, or at least a great lack of "fulness of faith" in the Saviour. The faith of some is divided between the Christ and the Church, or some human priesthood; others, between the Christ and the sanctions of reason or philosophy; and others, between the Christ and what they conceive to be their own personal merits. If we would draw near to God acceptably, we must do so "in full assurance of faith" in our great Priest as the only and all-sufficient Mediator. 3. *With purity of heart and life.* "Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our body washed with pure water." There is a reference here to the Levitical purifications (cf. Exod. xxix. 21; Lev. viii. 30; xvi. 4, 24; ch. ix. 13, 14, 21, 22; 1 Pet. i. 2). And in the last clause of the text there is probably a reference to Christian baptism, which is symbolic of spiritual cleansing (cf. Acts xxii. 16). The idea seems to be that to approach God acceptably we must be morally pure in heart and in action. But "who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" And so we draw near to God at present trusting in the Christ for pardon and for purity. Through him we are justified before God by faith, and have daily cleansing for daily impurities. And hereafter we shall draw near to his blessed presence "having washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," and shall appear before him as members of "a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish."

CONCLUSION. 1. How great are our privileges of present access to God in prayer, and hope of future approach to him in person! 2. How solemn are our obligations to avail ourselves of our privileges, and to walk worthily of them!—W. J.

Ver. 23.—*Christian fidelity.* "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith," etc.

I. THE EXHORTATION TO CHRISTIAN FIDELITY. "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope, that it waver not." 1. *The object of our hope.* That in Christ we have at present forgiveness of our sins, the right of approach unto God, sanctifying influences, etc. That through Christ we shall attain unto the future and perfect rest—the sabbath-keeping which remains for the people of God. Or in brief, that Jesus is the Christ of God, and that in him we have salvation in its beginnings here and now, and shall have it in perfection hereafter. 2. *The confession of our hope.* (1) The confession made. The Christian baptism of these Hebrew Christians was a confession of their faith in Christ. When the hope is clear and assured, it "cannot remain dumb; it must speak, and give a reason of its own existence. It utters itself in a frank confession, which we are to hold fast." This confession is obligatory upon believers in Christ Jesus (cf. Matt. x. 32, 33; Luke xii. 8, 9; Rom. x. 9, 10; 1 John iv. 15). (2) The confession maintained. "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope, that it waver not." It is implied that there was a danger of their relinquishing it. They were in danger by reason of persecution (cf. John ix. 22); and by reason of the ritualistic and other attractions of Judaism, and the simplicity and spirituality of Christianity. And a clear, consistent, and steadfast confession of our Christian hope is imperilled to-day by not a few influences. There is danger from Satanic solicitation, from worldly suggestion and example, and from the inclinations and disinclinations of our lower nature. Visible and material interests would draw us away from the claims of the invisible and spiritual. Having so much to do with seen and temporal things, there is danger lest we relax the firmness of our grasp on the unseen and eternal verities. There is danger, too, of attempting to base our hope upon Christ and something else, rather than upon Christ and Christ alone. "Let us hold fast the confession," etc. Let there be no uncertainty, no timidity, no wavering, in our acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord. (a) Our own true interests enforce the exhortation of the text. (b) The great company of the glorified call upon us to "hold fast the confession of our hope," etc. (cf. ch. vi. 11, 12). (c) God himself summons us to fidelity and perseverance. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown."

II. THE ENCOURAGEMENT TO CHRISTIAN FIDELITY. "For he is faithful that promised."

Many are the promises which God has made to his people. Promises to the penitent, the tempted, the afflicted, the mourner, the weak, the perplexed, etc. Now, all these promises are perfectly reliable. Of this we have many guarantees; e.g.: 1. *His infinite intelligence*. "When he promises anything, he sees everything which may hinder, and everything which may promote the execution of it, so that he cannot discover anything afterwards that may move him to take up after-thoughts: he hath more wisdom than to promise anything which he knows he cannot accomplish." 2. *His almighty power*. He is able to perform all and everything that he has promised. "Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." 3. *His perfect faithfulness*. "It is impossible for God to lie" (ob. vi. 18; Titus i. 2). "God is not a man, that he should lie," etc. (Numb. xxiii. 19; 1 Sam. xv. 29). "With him can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning" (Jas. i. 17). "How many soever be the promises of God, in Jesus Christ is the yea," etc. (2 Cor. i. 20). The fidelity of God to his glorious promises should ensure our fidelity in the confession of our hope in the Lord Jesus Christ.—W. J.

Ver. 24.—*The duty and design of mutual consideration*. "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love," etc. An interesting connection of our text with the preceding verses of this paragraph is pointed out by Delitzsch. "How beautifully is the exhortation here disposed in conformity with the Pauline triad of Christian graces (1 Cor. xiii. 13; 1 Thess. i. 3; v. 8; Col. i. 4, 5)! First, the injunction to approach in the full assurance of *faith*; then that to hold fast the confession of our *hope*; and now a third, to godly rivalry in the manifestation of Christian *love*."

I. THE DUTY OF MUTUAL CONSIDERATION. "Let us consider one another." This exhortation does not warrant any impertinent interference in the concerns of others, or sanction the conduct of busybodies and gossips. It calls upon us to cherish a mutual regard, and to exercise a kind consideration one for another. We should consider the wants, weaknesses, temptations, trials, successes, failures, and varying experiences of each other. With a brother in his shortcomings and sins we should be patient and forbearing, slow to condemn, but quick to raise and restore. "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass," etc. (Gal. vi. 1, 2). With each other we should sympathize in our respective joys and sorrows. Our religious duties, motives, aims, trials, joys, and hopes are very similar in their character; therefore "let us consider one another," sympathize with one another, and strengthen one another.

II. THE DESIGN OF MUTUAL CONSIDERATION. "To provoke unto love and good works." "To provoke" is here used in a good sense—to excite, or to call into activity for a worthy purpose. "Consider one another" in order to produce in each other a generous rivalry in love and good works. Mark the importance of these two things. 1. *Love*. It is the supreme grace of Christian character (1 Cor. xiii. 13). It is the most Christ-like. It is the most God-like. "God is love." It is that which most truly represents our Saviour to the world. It is that which is most extolled in the sacred Scriptures. The Bible abounds in exhortations to love one another and to love God (Lev. xix. 18, 34; Deut. vi. 5; x. 19; Matt. xxii. 36—40; John xv. 12; 1 Cor. xiii.; Col. iii. 14; 1 Tim. i. 5; 1 Pet. iv. 8; 1 John iii. 11—24; iv. 7—21). On earth and in time love exalts and imparts an attractive lustre and beauty to the character. And it qualifies for the glories of heaven and eternity. 2. *Good works*; beautiful actions. Love is the fountain of all beautiful deeds. Our works are beautiful in proportion as love is our motive and inspiration in them. That which is done selfishly, grudgingly, or in the spirit of a hireling, has no goodness or beauty. Love is the purest and mightiest inspiration. No difficulties deter love; no dangers appall it; no toils are too arduous or prolonged to be accomplished by it. The venturing and enduring power of love is wonderful. And, thank God! illustrations of it are not scarce. See it in the unwearying vigil and the unfailing ministry of the mother, night and day, day and night, by the couch where her sick child lies; or the wife by the bed of her afflicted husband, etc. Love delights in self-sacrificing service for the beloved. "Provoke unto love and good works." To teach a class well in the Sunday or the Ragged school; to visit the neglected, the sick, and the dying; to comfort some troubled heart or cheer some depressed spirit; to perform common duties with diligence and fidelity, or irksome duties with cheerfulness; to bear physical pain or social trial patiently; to suffer long

by reason of the faults of others, and still be kind to them;—these are “good works,” beautiful works. It is to love and good works that we are to provoke one another, and for this purpose we have to kindly consider each other. Put no obstacle in the path of any true worker, but cheer him, strengthen him. Perhaps the best way to stimulate others to love and good works is to set a good example in respect of these things. Learn here the most effective method of preventing strife and securing unity amongst Christian brethren. Kindly mutual consideration, love, and good works preclude disagreement, and unite hearts in sacred and blessed fellowship.—W. J.

Ver. 25.—*Warning against the neglect of social worship.* “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom of some is; but exhorting one another.” This exhortation is not a positive command, but arises out of the nature of things, and the need of man as a spiritual being. Social worship does not become obligatory because it is commanded in the Scriptures; but we are exhorted not to neglect it because it is needful for us. The obligation springs not from the exhortation, but from the necessities of our being. Let us consider—

I. *MAN'S NEED OF SOCIAL WORSHIP.* 1. *Man needs worship.* A god is a necessity of man's being. He must have something to worship, even if it be only a fetish. This arises from the presence and influence of the religious and devotional elements and faculties in human nature. As these are refined and educated, so man is able to receive pure and exalted ideas of God. One of the bitterest of human wails is, “Ye have taken away my gods, and the priest; and what have I more?” The loss of even a false god is deemed ruinous by those who confided in it. The cry of the man whose religious nature has been enlightened by Divine revelation is, “My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.” The body needs the exercise of manual labour, or of athletics, or gymnastics, or it becomes weak and incapable. The mind must be employed in the acquisition of truth, in reflection upon truth and life, or its powers must be called forth in some other way, or it will sink into a condition of feebleness and decay. And the principle is equally applicable to the religious soul. If its powers be not employed in the worship of the Divine Being and in the effort to live usefully and holily, those powers will perish; the eyes of the soul will become blind, its ears deaf, its aspirations extinct. Man needs worship for the life and growth of his own religious nature. 2. *Man needs social worship.* He is a social being. His heart craves friendship. In sorrow and joy, in labour and rest, we long for companionship and sympathy. We are formed for fellowship and for mutual help. Hence, social worship is a necessity of our being. This need was divinely recognized in Judaism, and provision was made for it in the temple, in the great religious festivals, etc. Our Lord recognized this need in various ways (Matt. xviii. 17—20; Luke iv. 16). So also did the apostles. Even in the darkest seasons in the history of the Church of God, devout souls have felt this need and have sought satisfaction for it. “Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another,” etc. (cf. Mal. iii. 13—17). 3. *Social worship is often very beneficial and blessed.* Our Lord has promised that the unanimous prayers of such worshippers shall be answered, and that he himself will meet with them (Matt. xviii. 19, 20). In such assemblies of believers devotion and holy feeling pass from heart to heart until all hearts are aglow. Mutual prayer strengthens the weak disciple. One man is cast down and almost faithless, but his faith is invigorated and his soul encouraged by the influence of another who is believing and hopeful. Nor is worship the only engagement of these assemblies. Our text speaks of mutual exhortation. “Exhorting one another.” Brotherly counsel and encouragement and admonition are profitable to strengthen faith, incite to diligence, guard against declension, and promote the progress of the soul.

II. *MAN'S NEGLECT OF SOCIAL WORSHIP.* “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom of some is.” Notice: 1. *The causes of this neglect.* As our Epistle does not speak of the neglect of worship by the irreligious, but of the desertion of the Christian assemblies by those who themselves were avowedly Christians, we shall confine our attention to the causes of the neglect of social worship by those who manifest some respect for religion. (1) The necessity of social worship is not recognized, or inadequately recognized. The neglecter says, “There is no need for my frequent attendance at church; I can read the Bible or a sermon by my own fireside; and as for worship, we have that in the family.” But reading a sermon is not attendance upon

the divinely instituted preaching of the gospel. And family worship is not enough for man as a social being. Religion itself is social. As we need friends beyond our own domestic relations, so we need in religious exercises a wider circle than the home one. (2) Absorption in temporal and worldly affairs is another cause of the neglect of the Christian assemblies. The interests and occupations of this world and time fill the whole being; spiritual and eternal interests are disregarded; the soul and its needs are neglected; thus men are unjust to their own higher nature. (3) Decline in the spiritual life is another cause of this neglect. 2. *The danger of this neglect.* They whose custom it was to forsake the assemblies of Christians were not yet apostates from the Christian faith and confession. But the admonition and exhortation of the text suggest that they were in danger of apostasy. And the awful warnings which immediately follow more plainly indicate the dread peril. He who neglects the Christian assemblies is likely ere long to forsake the Christian Church and renounce the Christian faith, and he may even go on to tread underfoot the Son of God, and do despite unto the Spirit of grace.—W. J.

Vers. 26—29.—*The darkest sin and the most dreadful doom.* "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received," etc. These solemn words set before us—

I. A SIN OF THE GREATEST ENORMITY. To obtain a correct view of the dark sin which is here depicted, let us notice: 1. *The spiritual experience which preceded the sin.* Two clauses of our text set forth a personal experience of genuine religion. "After that we have received the knowledge of the truth." The word which is translated "knowledge"—*ἐπίγνωσις*—as Delitzsch points out, cannot mean an unreal or false knowledge, but a genuine and intelligent apprehension of the truth. "The sacred writer, therefore, clearly intimates by the very choice of the word that it is not a mere outward and historical knowledge of which he is here speaking, but an inward, quickening, believing apprehension of revealed truth (ch. vi. 4—8)." "The blood . . . wherewith he was sanctified." In the case supposed the man "had advanced so far in the reality of the spiritual life, that this blood had been really applied to his heart by faith, and its hallowing and purifying effects were visible in his life" (Alford). 2. *The character of the sin itself.* The sin is apostasy from Christianity, after having personally experienced its power and preciousness. But see how it is here sketched. (1) Contemptuous rejection of the Divine Redeemer. "Hath trodden underfoot the Son of God." The expression does not simply mean to cast a thing away as useless, which is afterwards carelessly trampled on by men (Matt. v. 13); but a deliberate, scornful, bitter treading down of a thing. So terribly wicked is the rejection of the Son of God which our text sets forth. (2) Profanation of the sacrificial blood of the Saviour. "Hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing." The blood of sacrifices offered under the Law was regarded as sacred, and as having cleansing power (Lev. xvi. 19). How much more really and more intensely holy must the blood of Christ be (ch. ix. 13, 14)! To regard this blood as common, or as the blood of an ordinary man, was not only a degradation of the most sacred thing, but also an admission that Jesus was deservedly put to death; for if his was the common blood of a mere man, he was a blasphemer, and according to the Jewish Law deserved death. (3) Insultation of the Holy Spirit. "And hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace;" or, "insulted the Spirit of grace." The expression designates the Holy Spirit as the Source of grace, and leads us to think of him as a living and loving Person. "To condemn or do despite to this Holy Spirit is to blaspheme the whole work of grace of which one has once been the subject, and to exhibit it as a deception and a lie. It is profanely to contradict the very truth of God, and draw down a vengeance which cannot fail" (Delitzsch). 3. *The aggravations of the sin.* The preceding experience of the blessings of Christianity sorely aggravates so bitter an apostasy from it. But the sin is further aggravated by the wilfulness, deliberateness, and continuousness with which it is committed. "The sin here spoken of is not a momentary or short-lived aberration, from which the infirm but sincere believer is speedily recalled by the convictions of the Spirit, but one wilfully persisted in." "If we sin wilfully." Moreover, it is not an act or acts of wilful sin committed once, or more than once, and then repented of, which is here set forth; but a continuous condition of sin. The use of the present participle—*ἡμαρτανόντες*—"indicates perseverance and continuance in

apostasy." It is not a case of ordinary religious backsliding or declension from Christ; for then there would be some hope of repentance and encouragement to repent (Jer. iii. 14; Hos. xiv. 4). It is a case of wilful, deliberate, contemptuous, persistent rejection of Christ and of Christianity, after having known his truth and experienced his grace.

II. A PUNISHMENT OF THE MOST TERRIBLE SEVERITY. 1. *The utter loss of the hope of spiritual reformation.* "There remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins." The sacrifices of Judaism to which, in the case supposed, the apostate returns have no power to take away sins. The efficacy of the sacrifice of the Saviour has not been exhausted by him, but he has deliberately and scornfully rejected it, so that for him it has no longer any atoning or saving power. And no other exists for him, or will be provided for him. When a man wilfully, contemptuously, and persistently rejects the only sacrifice through which salvation may be attained, what hope can there be for him of forgiveness and spiritual renewal? 2. *The dreadful anticipation of an awful judgment.* "There remaineth a certain fearful expectation of judgment." The apostate looks forward with dismay, and even with terror at times, to the approaching judgment and the righteous retributions which will follow. His punishment is already begun in his alarming anticipations of the dread penalties awaiting him hereafter. 3. *The infliction of a punishment worse than death.* "A fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. A man that hath set at nought Moses' Law dieth without compassion," etc. If an Israelite apostatized from Jehovah to idolatry, when "two witnesses or three witnesses" testified against him, he was to be stoned to death (Deut. xvii. 2—7). If one sought to seduce another to idolatry, the person so tempted was to take the lead in stoning the tempter to death, even though the tempter was the nearest and dearest relative, or a friend beloved as his own soul (Deut. xiii. 1—11). But for the apostate from Christ there is a "much sorer punishment" than the death of the body by stoning. The severity of the punishment will be in proportion to the clearness of the light and the richness of the grace and the preciousness of the privileges rejected by the apostate. "The wrath of God burns as hotly as his love, and strikes no less surely than justly." Yet it seems to us that nothing in the punishment of the apostate can be darker or more terrible than this, that for him "there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins." "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."—W. J.

Ver. 31.—*Falling into the hands of God—a contrast.* "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." "Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord" (1 Chron. xxi. 13). State briefly what led to this utterance of David. The taking of the census, etc. Wherein was the sin of numbering the people? Not in the mere act; for Israel had been numbered thrice before by the command of the Lord. But David took this census (1) without Divine authority or sanction; (2) from motives of pride and ostentation. Perhaps he was contemplating schemes of foreign conquest. Certainly the motive was a sinful one, and therefore the act was sinful. God was displeased thereby, and he determined to punish the king and his people for this and previous sins, e.g. the rebellions in which the people had joined. He, however, sent Gad the seer unto David to give him the choice of one out of three punishments (1 Chron. xxi. 11—14). With becoming humility and piety, the king left the judgment in the hand of God. He prayed that he might "not fall into the hand of man," and his people be destroyed three months before their foes; but whether the punishment should be "three years' famine, or three days the sword of the Lord, even the pestilence, in the land," he left to the decision of the merciful God. "David said unto Gad," etc. (1 Chron. xxi. 13). After these words the text from our Epistle has a strange sound: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." The sacred writer has been treating of a sin of extraordinary wickedness—apostasy from Christ; and apostasy characterized, not by ignorance, but by despite of the clearest knowledge; not by weakness, but by wilfulness; not by transitoriness, but by persistence. It is of the punishment of such an apostate that it is said, "It is a fearful thing," etc. "The hands of God are his almighty operations, whether in love or wrath." He is "the living God" because he is self-existent; his existence is independent, absolute, eternal. So "the hands of the living God" present the ideas of his almightiness and eternity. How fearful to fall into the punitive hands of such a Being! Man may be

angry with me, but his power is limited, and he dies, and then he can injure me no longer; but it is a fearful thing to fall into the avenging hands of him whose power is unlimited and whose existence is endless—the hands of the almighty and ever-living God. *Contrast these two fallings into the hands of God.*

I. THE ONE FALLS VOLUNTARILY INTO GOD'S HANDS; THE OTHER, COMPULSORILY. David deliberately and freely elected to leave himself in the hands of the Lord; that was his choice. But the wilfully and persistently wicked will fall into his hands as the guilty culprit falls into the hands of the officers of the law. The strong hand of Divine justice will seize the hardened rebel against God, and from that grip there will be no escape. Of our own free will let us now fall into his almighty and loving hands.

II. THE ONE FALLS INTO HIS HANDS IN HUMBLE PENITENCE; THE OTHER, IN HARDENED IMPENITENCE. David was sincerely and deeply repentant of his sin (1 Chron. xxi. 8, 17). But in the case supposed in our Epistle the sinner wilfully and defiantly persists in known and terrible sin, and is arrested by the Omnipotent hands as a daring rebel. And we have sinned and deserved God's wrath. How shall we meet him? in penitence, or in presumption? "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength," etc. (Job ix. 4). "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry," etc. (Ps. ii. 12).

III. THE ONE FALLS INTO HIS HANDS FIRMLY TRUSTING IN HIS MERCY; THE OTHER, DEEPLY DREADING HIS WRATH. "David said . . . for very great are his mercies." He could and did confide in the love of God even in his judgments. But when the desperately wicked fall into God's hands it will be in abject terror (cf. ver. 27). Again let us imitate David, and trust God's mercy, not man's. "If you are *accused*, it is better to trust him for justice than to trust men; if you are *guilty*, it is better to trust him for mercy than to trust men; if you are *miserable*, it is better to trust him for deliverance than men."

IV. THE ONE FALLS INTO HIS CHASTISING HAND; THE OTHER, INTO HIS AVENGING HAND. David and his people were to be punished, but the punishment was paternal chastisement for their profit. They were to suffer that they might be saved as a nation. But very different is the punishment of the wilful and persistent sinner (see vera. 26, 27, 30, 31). What is our relation to God? Penitence, or persistence in sin? Humble trust, or abject terror? We must fall into his hands somehow. How shall it be? "Hast thou an arm like God?" Let it be thus—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall;
Be thou my Strength and Righteousness,
My Saviour, and my All."

(Watts.)

W. J.

Vers. 32—34.—*The recollection of past sufferings an encouragement to present steadfastness.* "But call to remembrance the former days," etc. Our subject divides itself into two main branches.

I. SUFFERINGS ENDURED FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF THE FAITH IN THE PAST. 1. *These sufferings were of various kinds.* (1) Sufferings in their own persons. (a) Infliction of physical pain. "Being made a gazing-stock by afflictions." The afflictions, or tribulations, arose from active and bitter persecutions. And these were inflicted (as the word translated "gazing-stock," or spectacle, clearly indicates) in the theatre before the assembled multitude, that to the physical pain might be added the sense of shame. (b) Subjection to undeserved reproaches. "Being made a gazing-stock by reproaches." They were publicly assailed by the scornful jeers of their persecutors. The people of God have frequently borne the bitterest anguish by reason of the malignant and contemptuous utterances of their adversaries (cf. Pa. xli. 5—8; xlii. 8, 10). (c) Spoliation of their worldly possessions. "Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods." Ebrard suggests that by this "we are to understand what we find still at this day taking place in the sphere of the Jewish mission. When a Jew shows himself determined to become a Christian, he is disinherited by his relations, his share in the property is withheld from him, his credit and every source of gain withdrawn; he falls into a state of complete destitution." (2) Sufferings in sympathy with other sufferers. "Becoming partakers with them that were so used.

For ye had compassion on them that were in bonds." In a truly Christian spirit they sympathized with others who were in tribulation; they wept with those who wept; they made common cause with their persecuted brethren. 2. *Their sufferings were of great severity.* They "endured a great conflict of sufferings." The severity of the sufferings of the early Christians is witnessed to by very many portions of the New Testament (Acts v. 17—42; vi. 9—15; vii. 54—60; viii. 1—4; ix. 1, 2; xii. 1—5; xiv. 19; xvi. 19—24; xxi. 27—32; xxii. 24, 25; 1 Cor. iv. 9—13; 2 Cor. iv. 8—11; xi. 23—27; 1 Pet. iv. 12—19; Rev. ii. 9, 10). 3. *Their sufferings were because of their Christianity.* "After ye were illuminated, ye endured," etc. This enlightenment is that which led them to embrace Christianity and trust in Christ (cf. ch. vi. 4). They endured persecutions for his Name's sake. 4. *Their sufferings were patiently endured.* "Ye endured"—the word used by the sacred writer indicates endurance "without losing heart or hope." They "took joyfully the spoiling of their possessions." Like the apostles they "rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his Name." One thing which sustained them in this noble endurance of cruel persecutions was their assurance that they possessed precious and imperishable treasures. "Knowing that ye have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one." They had treasure in heaven beyond the reach of their mightiest and most malignant enemies. Three things concerning this possession are worthy of brief notice. (1) Its certainty. They knew that it existed, and existed for them; for they had the earnest of it in their hearts. (2) Its superiority. It is "better" than any earthly possessions. (3) Its perpetuity. "An enduring substance." Heavenly possessions are inalienable and imperishable. The knowledge that they had these sustained them under the loss of earthly possessions and sore tribulations. If any are called to suffer in the cause of Jesus Christ in these days, let them think of these noble endurers of far severer afflictions, and gather courage and patience from their example.

II. *SUFFERINGS RECALLED FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF FAITH IN THE PRESENT.* "Call to remembrance the former days, in which," etc. It is implied that they were suffering in the time then present because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and would probably have to suffer for some time (cf. ch. xii. 3—13). They are exhorted to call to mind the tribulations which they had already borne victoriously to inspire them in the endurance of present and future afflictions, and to preserve them from apostasy. This was not to be an occasional exercise, but a constant habit. Hence the sacred writer uses the present tense, the force of which is thus given by Alford, "Call ever to remembrance the former days." But how would this recollection of past trials and victories assist them in their present conflicts? 1. *All the fruit of their former sufferings would be lost if they did not continue faithful.* "To begin in faith, but not to endure, leads to useless sacrifices, vain hopes, and fruitless sufferings." These Hebrew Christians had already borne far too much in the cause of Christ for them to abandon that cause now because they were called to bear more tribulation. They were like capitalists who had invested so much in this enterprise, that they had only to call to mind the amount of their investments to save them from giving up their interest in it because other calls were made upon them. 2. *All the help afforded them in former sufferings was available unto them still.* The God who had helped them in the past would not forsake them in future trials; for he is ever the same—the same in wisdom, in power, in faithfulness, in goodness. Thus, the recollection of former deliverances should be an inspiration in present trials and for future difficulties. "All the historic triumphs of the Divine arm stimulate us in the present battle." "Because thou hast been my Help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." Thus David frequently reasoned (cf. 1 Sam. xvii. 32—37). And thus should we encourage ourselves in God, especially in seasons of suffering or of sorrow, of temptation or tribulation.—IV. J.

Vers. 35—37.—*Christian fidelity and its reward.* "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath," etc. We have in our text—

I. *A GREAT REWARD PROMISED.* "Great recompense of reward. . . . Ye might receive the promise." By "the promise" is meant here, not the promise itself, but the blessings promised; not the word of promise, for this they had already, but the good things which that word assured unto them. By the recompense of reward and the promised blessings we understand one and the same thing; i.e. "the promise of the eternal

inheritance" (ch. ix. 15), "the better and enduring substance" (ver. 34). It is the promise of eternal life in Jesus Christ. The life is characterized by (1) purity; (2) progress; (3) blessedness; (4) perpetuity. "A perpetuity of bliss is bliss." This life is promised to every believer in our Lord and Saviour. "Whosoever believeth on him shall have eternal life." This life the Christian believer has now in its imperfect and early stages; he will have it hereafter in its fulness and perfection. "Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our Life," etc. (Col. iii. 3).

II. A GREAT DUTY MENTIONED. To do the will of God. This must precede the reception of the promised blessings. "Having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise." If we combine the interpretation of several expositors, we obtain what we regard as the true interpretation of "the will of God" here. Thus M. Stuart: "To do the will of God here, is to obey the requirement, to believe and trust in Christ" (cf. John vi. 40). Ebrard: "By the will of God, in this context, is to be understood his will that we should confess Christ's Name before men." And Delitzsch: "The will of God is . . . our steadfast perseverance in faith and hope." It seems to us that the doing the will of God includes each and all of these things—faith in Christ, confession of Christ, and continuance in Christ. Moreover, the Christian accepts the will of God as the authoritative and supreme rule of his life. This will is sovereign, gracious, and universally binding. Let us endeavour to do it willingly, patiently, and cheerfully; for in so doing it our duty will become our freedom, dignity, and delight. We must do this will if we would receive the recompense of reward. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

III. A GREAT NEED EXPERIENCED. "Cast not away therefore your confidence. . . . For ye have need of patience," or endurance. The confidence which is not to be cast away and the endurance which we need are, if not identical, closely related. The confidence is perhaps (as Ebrard suggests) the root, and patience the fruit, the endurance growing out of the confidence. The confidence is the joyous assurance "of faith and hope, and boldness in confessing Christ." We must not cast this away, as a dismayed soldier casts away his weapons; for we shall need it in the conflicts which yet await us. And the patience is "that unshaken, unyielding, patient endurance under the pressure of trial and persecution, that steadfastness of faith, apprehending present blessings, and of hope, with heaven-directed eye anticipating the glorious future, which obtains what it waits for." Now we need both these things, the confidence and the patience, the boldness and the endurance; for: 1. *Our spiritual battles are not all fought yet.* We still have foes to encounter; therefore we shall need our confidence and courage, our faith and hope. 2. *Our various trials are not all passed through yet.* We shall have to meet with losses and sorrows, to suffer afflictions, to be beset with difficulties, to bear disappointments; hence we "have need of patience." 3. *Our possession of the promised inheritance is not attained yet.* Perfect purity and peace, progress and blessedness, are not ours as yet. There are times when the recompense of reward seems long delayed, and our spiritual advancement towards it seems slow; and we have need of patience to wait and hope, and to work while we wait.

IV. A GREAT ENCOURAGEMENT PRESENTED. "For yet a very little while, and he that cometh shall come, and will not tarry." The end of our trials is very near. The inheritance of the promised blessing will speedily be ours. "The recompense of the reward comes as certainly as the Lord himself, who is already on the way." "Be patient therefore, brethren, . . . for the coming of the Lord is at hand."

"Stand up! stand up for Jesus!
The strife will not be long;
This day the noise of battle,
The next the victor's song."
(Duffield.)

W. J.

Ver. 38.—*Life by faith.* "Now the just shall live by faith." In this place our text means that by persevering faith the righteous man would be saved fully and to the end. He who continued in the exercise of faith would be kept safely amidst all dangers and all temptations to apostasy, and inherit the recompense of reward. But we propose to

regard the text as the statement of a general truth of the Christian life, as St. Paul uses it in Rom. i. 17; Gal. iii. 11. Thus viewed, it presents to our notice—

I. THE CHARACTER SPECIFIED. This is marked by two leading features. 1. *Righteousness*. "The just," or righteous. The righteousness of the Christian is (1) in character. He possesses the forgiveness of sins, and is accepted by God through Jesus Christ. The apostle of the Gentiles sets forth this righteousness: "That I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own," etc. (Phil. iii. 9). The righteousness of the Christian is (2) in conduct. "He that doeth righteousness, is righteous" (1 John iii. 7, 10). 2. *Religiousness*. The Revised Version gives our text thus: "But my righteous one shall live by faith." This we regard as the correct text. It sets before us one who is godly as well as just, whose righteousness is joined with reverence, and is exalted by the union. A man cannot be righteous towards God without being religious. Unless we worship and love and obey him, we do him injustice. In the Christian character piety and principle, righteousness and reverence, must go hand in hand.

II. THE LIFE MENTIONED. We are not acquainted with a satisfactory definition of life. The things of deepest significance and greatest importance defy our powers of definition. So we cannot set forth adequately in a sentence the life spoken of in the text. It is far more than physical and intellectual existence and activity. "Knowledge, truth, love, beauty, goodness, faith, alone can give vitality to the mechanism of existence." The life of true personal religion is that which our text speaks of. It is the life of supreme love to God, the life of Christ in man. "Christ," says Canon Liddon, "is the quickening Spirit of Christian humanity; he lives in Christians; he thinks in Christians; he acts through Christians and with Christians; he is indissolubly associated with every movement of the Christian's deepest life. 'I live,' exclaims the apostle; 'yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' This felt presence of Christ it is which gives both its form and its force to the sincere Christian life. That life is a loyal homage of the intellect, of the heart, and of the will, to a Divine King, with whom will, heart, and intellect are in close and constant communion, and from whom there flows forth, through the Spirit and the sacraments, that supply of light, of love, and of resolve which enriches and ennobles the Christian soul."

III. THE MEANS OF THIS LIFE. "Shall live by faith." Brief consideration of two points is essential. 1. *The nature of this faith*. It is far more than the assent of the reason, or apprehension by the reason. It is a moral rather than an intellectual act. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." "When the soul in very truth responds to the message of God, the complete responsive act of faith is threefold. This act proceeds simultaneously from the intelligence, from the heart, and from the will of the believer. His intelligence recognizes the unseen object as a fact. His heart embraces the object thus present to his understanding; his heart opens instinctively and unhesitatingly to receive a ray of heavenly light. And his will too resigns itself to the truth before it; it places the soul at the disposal of the object which thus rivets its eye and conquers its affections."¹ 2. *The Object of this faith*. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself is the grand Object of the faith of the Christian. We accept him in the three great relationships which he sustains to his true disciples. As our Prophet we exercise faith in him. He claimed to be "the Truth." On all questions of morality and religion, of sin and salvation, of life and death, we bow to him as our infallible Teacher, and unhesitatingly accept his Word. We believe in him as our Priest. He has made full atonement for sins; he is our perfect Representative with the Father; he is our tender, compassionate Saviour. To him the heart turns in its sins for forgiveness, in its sorrows for consolation. We loyally accept him also as our King. He is the Sovereign of our will and the Lord of our life. We believe in him as our moral Master, whose authority is supreme. Thus Christ is the Object of the Christian's faith. "By faith the soul is to be moving ever towards Christ, resting ever upon Christ, living ever in Christ. Christ is to be the end, the support, the very atmosphere of its life." He who thus believes in him shall have eternal life (John iii. 16; Eph. ii. 8).—W. J.

Ver. 1.—*The Law, its service and its limits*. I. THE AIM OF GOD. To make men perfect. All God's revelations and the powers belonging to them have this for their

¹ 'The Divinity of our Lord,' by Canon Liddon.

end, to take imperfect men (men in whom there are all sorts of imperfections, physical, intellectual, spiritual, men who have mixed with their nature a corrupt and debasing element) and make them perfect. And this is to be done according to a Divine standard of perfection, not a human one. Indeed, that human excellence should attain a Divine standard is as necessary for the satisfaction of man as it is for the glory of God. All that is instrumental and ministerial about human life is to be measured as it serves towards the perfecting of the individual man in true godliness and Christian character. And we must ever remember this in the midst of all the infirmities and lapses of our present life. We are, indeed, strangely blind to the marvellous possibilities that lie hid in every human being. We often have to say of men that their purposes are broken off, but forget all the time that God's purposes for men may all be fulfilled if only they are willing to be co-workers together with him.

II. **THE SERVICE OF THE LAW.** The Law, taken in its most comprehensive sense, including commandments as to conduct on the one hand, and ceremonies on the other, was of immediate service in two ways. It made men dissatisfied with their present selves, and intensely anxious to be better. If it did not give a standard of life positively, it was something that it gave one negatively. One of the great merits of Ps. cxix. is in showing what the Law could do by way of stirring up spiritual aspirations, and filling men with a sublime discontent. For what the writer of this psalm expresses, thousands must have felt. Like Paul, they wanted to do good, yet evil was present with them. And always, to many, the Law must have been indeed a shadow of good things to come, a proof that there was abiding substance which would one day be manifested.

III. **THE LIMITS OF THE LAW.** The Law was good as indicating where perfection lay; but there was in it nothing dynamic, nothing to advance men one stage nearer perfection. Indeed, the Law, apart from its proper sequel in Christ, would have done harm rather than good, inasmuch as it would have driven men to despair. Perfection would have been seen across an impassable abyss. It has always been a curse of fallen human nature that what God gives for one purpose man uses for another. In the course of ages the Jew had reduced a Law meant to rouse the heart, a Law that in the very essence of it was spiritual, to a mere collection of external ceremonies. The Law was reckoned as something that could be obeyed with the hands and lips. And because men had lost the main part of the Law, the Law itself must have fallen into disrepute with many. Outwardly they saw a profession of religion; inwardly they saw a sordid and uncharitable life. And even the gospel may be misused as much as the Law. There may be an outward semblance of connection with Christ, while he has no power over the heart. Men did come to the Law seeking perfection; all Pharisees were not bad men at heart; their consciences were misled by traditional teaching as to the importance of ceremonies. In their own strength they did their very best to obey. What is wanted is that we should really come to Christ, that our hearts should be brought fully under the regenerating power of his Spirit. Then shall we know something of steady and joyous approach to perfection; for while perfection itself may only come by slow degrees, yet Christ surely means us to have the satisfaction of knowing constantly that we are in the right way.—Y.

Ver. 3.—*Reminding men of sins.* I. **THE NEED OF SUCH A REMINDER.** Men need to be impressed with the fact that sin is sin, something special, something done in defiance of God's Law. If we do hurt to a fellow-man, even if he condone and excuse, that does not put things as they were before. God would have us to consider what a serious and terrible thing it is that we should do wrong at all. Then also we need to be reminded because of our liability to forget. Life is one long sin, made up of daily omissions and commissions in what are called little things. We see well enough as each day is passing over our heads what wrong words we have spoken, what evil thoughts we have had in our hearts; some days we feel deeply enough the sin of the day; but soon the impression is gone. The total of life's sin, however, still remains, and it is above all things needful that we should not forget it. Then most important of all, perhaps, is it that we should be reminded how much of the trouble and misery of life comes from our ignorance. Sins of ignorance were specially provided for in the Mosaic economy. A man can hardly be blamed for what he does in ignorance, and

certainly he is in a very different position from one who lets lust and pride lead him against truth and light. But the evil done in ignorance is evil none the less, and men need to be wakened up to consider how much truth and righteousness they are still ignorant of. The past is not done with because it is past. The future has its roots in the past, and this yearly reminder of sin among God's people of old should teach us to desire reminders of the sin of life, not merely at particular seasons, but as often as possible.

II. WE HAVE OUR REMINDERS OF SIN. Bodily reminders in the shape of disease and weakness consequent on evil courses of life. Reminders in the feelings of the heart consequent on disappointment and failure from selfish courses of action. Especially the Christian, the devout Christian, has his reminders at the Lord's Supper. Jesus himself spoke of this institution as an *antitype*. It was to remind his people of himself, but this very reminding included many things beside. Jesus must be remembered with certain surroundings, and no sinner can remember him rightly without remembering his sins at the same time.—Y.

Vers. 19—22.—*Approaching God*. I. WHY THE APPROACH IS TO BE MADE. There needed the statement of no reason here; the necessity of approach is assumed. The great thing required was to substitute a new ground and a new mode of approach for a ground and a mode which had become useless, nay, even harmful. The Israelite had always acknowledged that he must approach Deity in some way or other. If God had not appointed a certain way of access in the Levitical ordinances, the Israelite would have taken his own way. Indeed, it is lamentably plain that too much he did take his own way. He had to be turned from the golden calf by the sharpest of chastisements, and many a century elapsed before image-worship and debasing rites lost their hold upon him. Moses and the prophets, say all the representatives of Jehovah under the first covenant, had quite as hard work to turn away their fellow-countrymen from image-worship as the writer of this Epistle afterwards had to turn them away from types to antitypes, from shadow to substance, and from a temporary discipline to its abiding result in the Christ. The approach to God may be looked at as either a need or a duty, and whichever aspect be considered, it is evident that a loving, foreseeing God will provide the way. He provides the right way to the right end. Let us try to imagine him leaving Israel to its own devices when it escaped from Egypt. The people would still have built altars, slain sacrifices, and appointed priests. What God does is to deliver the conscience from the tyranny of every idolatry and bring it under reasonable government and guidance. He frees human religious customs from cruelty, lust, superstition, and makes them typical and instructive. And now we come to the means of a full approach to God in Christ, is it not plain that all this is to supply a corresponding need and give scope for a corresponding duty? Jesus tells us there is a *true Vine*; so there is a true altar, a true sacrifice, a true Priest. The image-worshipper, whose darkened heart is filled with falsehoods about the nature and the service of God, is yet faithful to what he thinks to be right. Shall we be less faithful, who have opportunities for such service and such blessing.

II. THE GROUND OF APPROACH. The spirit of man has to find its entrance into the holy place, and has to give its reason for confidence in expecting admission—a reason which every man must apply to his own understanding, so as to make his approach as practical, as persevering, as possible. It is not expected of us, who have no experience of the details of Mosaic sacrificial institutions, to appreciate all the details here. We have not to be won away from sacrifices of beasts and dependence on an earthly priest. But, nevertheless, we must apprehend that the only ground of satisfactory approach to God is in Christ. There is no way to reach harmony with that great Being in whom is light and no darkness at all, and who cannot be tempted with evil, save through Christ. In Christ there is hope for the sinner, something to draw him, something to lift him above useless resolutions and vain struggles. Jesus Christ is the Way. "You have come to Mount Zion," says the writer in ch. xii. To the real Zion, which is part of the city of the living God. But we are brought there that we may be safely and permanently introduced into the true holy of holies, and into that communion with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which gives purity and blessedness.

III. THE MODE OF APPROACH. The whole man must be united in a true approach

to God. It is *now* that we have to approach, and there can be no separation between the inward and the outward man. The heart must be right and the body must be right. Mere bodily approach could never have profited at any time, save to the extent that it freed the worshipper from the penalties of complete disobedience. But still bodily approach has its place. With the body we have to serve God; and cleanliness is not only a wholesome and a comfortable thing—it is also sacred. People have sometimes been exposed to ridicule by quoting the common saying, "Cleanliness is next to godliness," as being from the Scriptures. They are not so far wrong, for that is what this passage virtually says. Then with a true heart, and a vigorous, prosperous faith bearing us onwards, we shall make a real and secure progress towards possession of the mysteries of godliness.—Y.

Ver. 23.—*The Christian's steadfast acknowledgment of his hope.* I. THE EXISTENCE OF ACTUAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT IS ASSUMED. The writer is addressing those who are avowedly Christians. Jesus has already been acknowledged as Apostle and High Priest (ch. iii. 1), and already an exhortation has been given to hold fast the acknowledgment of him. In the first age of Christianity, the breaking away from Judaism or from Gentile idolatry could not, of course, be concealed. It never was meant to be paraded or obtruded; but, in the very nature of things, light rising in the midst of darkness must manifest itself. Saul's conversion was soon known in Damascus. The Nicodemus-attitude, however excusable at first, cannot long be maintained. It must advance to acknowledgment or subside into spiritual indifference. Many there must have been who, like Timothy, had made a good confession before many witnesses; therein, as Paul hinted, following the example of Jesus before Pilate (1 Tim. vi. 12, 13).

II. THE SPECIAL FORM OF THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT HERE REFERRED TO. It is the acknowledgment of a hope. These Jewish Christians have made all their expectation of the future to depend on Christ. Hope is the natural and proper feeling of the human breast; men hope for that which it is within the limit of human ability to attain. And when Christ, by his death and resurrection, and by the gift of his Spirit, has enlarged that limit, then the hope is enlarged and elevated also. Christ meant that a spiritual and lofty hope should brighten the arduous lives of his servants; and evidently his first apostles had such a hope as they contemplated the possibilities of their own lives. In referring to the Christian hope here, the writer is but continuing the strain running through the previous part of the Epistle (iii. 6; vi. 11, 18; vii. 19). If we do not get hope into our hearts from our connection with Christ, then that connection is a delusion.

III. THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT WILL BE OF NO USE UNLESS IT IS HELD FAST. We must avow, without the slightest hesitation or vacillation, the confidence and expectation we have from our connection with Christ. And we can only make the avowal if the feeling is real, deep, and based on a proper understanding of what it is that Christ promises. Christ is not bound to justify all our hopes, but only such as the obedient and spiritually minded ought to entertain. Note the strong words which the writer uses in insisting on the need of holding fast this acknowledgment. This shows what temptation there would be to fall away from it.

IV. THE GROUND GIVEN FOR HOLDING FAST. "He is faithful that promised." The word of one who has done such things as Jesus, and manifested such a character, is the very best ground we can have. The faithfulness of Jesus is known in all those points whereby, in the present world, it can be tested. When he speaks of the treasures of a future which we cannot yet test, our wisdom is to hold fast to him, and not listen to the confused utterances of men, or the too often rebellious promptings of our own hearts.—Y.

Vers. 24, 25.—*Mutuality in the Christian life.* The exhortation in ver. 23 is one for individual Christians, looking towards their Saviour in direct connection with him and towards their own future. But so soon as ever we feel sure that we are keeping right with respect to Christ, we must make that rightness subservient to the strengthening, the comfort, and the usefulness of our fellow-Christians. We must both help them and look for help to them. Mutual help for common needs is eminently a Christian principle.

I. WE HAVE TO CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER, *i.e.* we must look well into the character, the habits, the position, the abilities, the needs of all whom we have sufficient opportunity to estimate. We must get an honest and adequate view. We must not expect too much from them, neither must we let them off with too little. This knowledge is to be gained by real consideration, not by hearsay, not hastily, not casually. We must get below the surface. Such a consideration as this may have many results.

II. THE SPECIAL AIM HERE TO BE KEPT IN VIEW. "To provoke unto love and to good works." There is a large meaning in this expression. First of all it means that when we look at the needs of others, especially of fellow-Christians, when we look into those needs, seeing how deep, how abiding, how discomposing they are, we shall be stirred up to a very passion of love for the needy and a consequent doing of good works for their relief. And, moreover, when the consideration is what it ought to be, there will be wisdom, proportion, true economy, adjustment of means to ends, in the good works. But also those whom we consider must be stirred up to have love in their own hearts and good works in their hands.

III. A PECULIAR PERIL. That of living in isolation. Living the Christian life in isolation. People will not act so in the needs, duties, and pleasures of common life. They will gather together in twos or threes, or any number that may be necessary. But their religion they keep to themselves. They do not understand how much they can be helped by mutual edification. Not that the writer supposes this tendency can be universal. He expressly points out that it is the habit of some. Such do not understand their obligations and their needs; their latent ability to comfort others on the one hand, or their latent weakness, their certain need of comfort, on the other.

IV. THE MEANS OF THIS MUTUAL EDIFICATION. "Exhorting one another." Real exhortation is to be made by virtue of the Holy Spirit working in him who exhorts. It must not have its sole origin in experiences and energies of the natural man. An exhortation which shall be truly a good work must come from a spiritual man. He only discerns the reality of spiritual truth; he only can communicate it with the requisite force.

V. A SPECIAL MOTIVE. The day of the Lord's coming is approaching. This day, as we know from ample evidence, was believed to be very near by the primitive Christians. They did right in so believing, for their Lord wanted them to be ever ready. And in any case the practical equivalent of that day is not far off from each Christian in his earthly life. His opportunity to show love and do good works will soon be over.—Y.

Ver. 31.—*Falling into the hands of the living God.* I. AS ILLUSTRATED IN HISTORY. The whole passage, vers. 26—31, is a very serious one to read, insisting as it does on the reality of Divine retribution upon those guilty of neglect and disobedience. It was evidently necessary, however, to deal with this point and thus make the comparison between the old and the new covenant complete. How will God deal with those who wilfully neglect the ample and gracious provisions of the new covenant? The first element in the answer is given by inquiring how he dealt with despisers of the old covenant—despisers of Moses as Jehovah's deputy and messenger. A great deal hangs on the word *wilfully*. Jehovah has always been long-suffering with ignorance and thoughtlessness. But when men rise like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, with the purposes of rebellion and self-assertion strong in their heart, knowing what they are doing, and doing it deliberately and defiantly, then God has to be equally assertive of his rightful authority and the rightful authority of whomsoever he makes his representative. The Jew did not question that it was a right thing that the despiser of Moses' Law should die without fail under two or three witnesses. Of course we must guard against arguing back from great catastrophes to great sins. What we are bound to do is to recognize the plain asserted connection between some great sins and the consequences that followed. And in every case, to every individual, the consequences are real; only in some cases the consequences have been made terribly conspicuous by way of warning.

II. AS CONTRASTED WITH THE IMPOTENCE OF OTHER HANDS INTO WHICH WE MAY FALL. Jehovah, the living God, is here contrasted with lifeless idols. Jehovah, the

God who makes unfailing, righteous, potent judgments, as contrasted with idolatrous priests who have no power except by working on the superstitious fears of men. Attachment to Mosaic institutions had hardened into something little better than idolatry. The living God had become a mere name, the centre of a mechanical ritual. Men stood in terror of their own traditional delusions. Or they stood in terror of one another like those parents of the blind man, who feared they would be put out of the synagogue if they acknowledged Jesus as the Christ. It is right that men should be afraid, but how often are they afraid of the wrong things! To fall into the hands of men must have a dreadful look at first, but when the position is fully estimated it is a mere trifle. The really fearful thing is to fall into the hands of the living God. He is something very different from an *empty* superstition or a living man.

III. AS CONNECTED WITH THE IMMENSE SIN OF WILFULLY REJECTING JESUS. The writer allows us to be under no mistake as to what he means. Whosoever can truly say that he does not trample underfoot the Son of God, does not reckon the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, does not do despite to the Spirit of grace,—such a one is free. In the first days of breaking away from Judaism, when all the malevolence and bitterness of the worst sort of Jews came into play, there would be more occasion of warning of this sort than now. And even with regard to such men there is another side to be considered. Paul was once bitter and malevolent enough, but he put in the plea that what he did he did ignorantly, in unbelief. God only can judge the heart of a man enough to say how far his rejection is really deliberate, in the face of light and knowledge.—Y.

Ver. 34.—*The right estimate of temporal possession.* I. THE RIGHT ESTIMATE ITSELF. This is a mean between extremes. To despise worldly possessions, to speak of them as if they were to be trampled underfoot as always worthless, is not a Christian state of mind. The worldly man overvalues and the ascetic undervalues. The Christian, taught by his Master, learns to use the world as not abusing. It is not well in ordinary circumstances to make comparisons; a wise and devout man will use everything for God according to its nature and its scope. But there may come a time when the man has to make his election between the temporal and the eternal, between what the world has to give and what Christ has to give. Then it will be seen where the affections are. A treasure is not a treasure in itself; it is a treasure relatively to its possessor. Where the heart is, there the treasure is. One may see the pearl of great price where another sees a trifle, as it were a mere nothing. No one estimates temporal possessions rightly unless he is willing to sacrifice them for eternal interests. There is only one answer to the question, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" A man will surrender all his wealth to keep his life. How much more, then, should he be willing to surrender his wealth to keep his spiritual hope, his vital connection with the boundless spiritual wealth resident in Christ? This is not a question for the few rich men only; it is for every one who has possessions to lose. They may not have to be given up outright; they may not be in danger of loss through persecution; but they may have to be risked through adopting truly Christian principles of life.

II. THOSE WHO ARE TO GAIN THE RIGHT ESTIMATE. In making the estimate, everything depends on the life and character of him who has to make it. The estimate is made, if one may say so, in an unconscious kind of way. It is a personal, practical decision, not a mere speculative one with little or no influence on the life. The decision is made, and some of the consequences of it attained, before the critical character of those consequences is discerned. In great moments of life we may have to decide on the spur of the moment; and the only man who can decide rightly is the spiritual man—he whose inner eye is open to see things as they really are. The pearl of great price is to be seen intuitively or not at all. There must be a firm resolution fixed in the heart to gain and to keep this pearl at whatever cost. Once we have got into right relations with Christ, comparisons between his claims and the claims of other beings are not hard to make. In making comparisons between one temporal possession and another, the character of those who make the comparison may or may not be a matter of importance. But in distinguishing between the temporal and the eternal, character is everything. We must have the Spirit of Christ

working in us most energetically if we would be lifted above all danger of sacrificing the eternal to the temporal.—Y.

Ver. 36.—*Something to do and something to wait for.* I. SOMETHING IN THE PAST. "Having done the will of God." The writer did not hereby mean that his readers had done all the will of God; he simply recognized the fact that they had complied with the will of God in Christ Jesus as far as that will had been made known in distinct words and could be complied with in distinct acts. Jesus had been proclaimed to them as the Christ; they had accepted him as such fully and practically; they had welcomed him as the Fulfiller of the Law and the prophets. They had received his Holy Spirit. They had renounced all faith in Judaism as necessary to acceptable service of God. Their position might be expressed thus: "We have done the will of God as far as it has been made known to us; if there be anything more for us to do on earth let us know, and we will do it." Now, the question for us is—Have we got as far as these people? They were standing on the fact that what they knew of God's will they had done. Have we done what we know of God's will? Or, to go further back still—Have we knowledge of what it is that God wills us to do? We all have to wait, but what is our standing-place as we wait? That will make all the difference. Have we done the whole of what can be done any day? "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." The five wise virgins trimmed their lamps and filled their oil-vessels, and then they could wait with composure and confidence. Long as Christ's coming seems to the truly faithful, it will come all too soon for some.

II. SOMETHING IN THE PRESENT. The spirit of patient waiting. It must have been very hard to wait among persecutors and unjust spoliators. The second coming of the Master seemed the only effectual way of deliverance. But this second coming was a thing to be waited for, until it came in the fulness of time. God has to think of all individuals and all generations. God has to make all things work together for good to every man. We have to wait for others, as others have had to wait for us. The principle is laid down at the end of ch. xi. Meanwhile waiting is not altogether waiting. Something is given by the way. Even as Jesus had ineffable joys and satisfactions in the days of his flesh, there are like experiences for us. Patience is only truly patience when it is combined with hope, and true hope built on faith must be a gladness to the heart.

III. SOMETHING IN THE FUTURE. Something perfectly definite and certain. We know not how long we may have to wait, but at the end of the waiting there is something worth waiting for. Long did Israel wait in Egyptian bondage, but liberty came at last. Long did Israel wander in a comparatively little tract of land, but the settled life of Canaan came at last. Many generations lived and died with nothing save gracious prophecies to solace them, but the Christ came at last. And so Christ will come again without sin unto salvation.—Y.

Vers. 38, 39.—*The just man, his character and safety.* I. THE CHARACTER OF THE JUST MAN. It was inevitable, in an Epistle to Jewish Christians, that there should be some reference to that Pharisaic righteousness which consisted in a conformity to certain ritual regulations. There was the man just after the Pharisee fashion, because of his scrupulosity in ceremonial observances; and there was the man just in the sight of God, because he believed in God and showed his faith by his works. These Jewish Christians were righteous men because they were believers. They had been brought fully to comprehend that while God cared nothing for a round of ceremonies, he valued in the highest a spirit of trust in him—a spirit able to break away from the common reliance of men upon seen things, and to live as seeing him that is invisible. This is the only sort of righteousness that changes the whole of character; for if a man really trusts God, then men will be able to trust him and get real advantage out of him.

II. THE SAFETY OF THE JUST MAN. The just man shall live. By his faith he becomes just in the sight of God, and that faith, continuing and strengthening, preserves him. What can a round of ceremonies do for a man? The moment they lose their typical character, the moment they cease to be symbolic of spiritual realities, that same moment they bring the heart more than ever in bondage to the senses. The path of safety has always been the path entered on in response to the voice from on

high. To the eye of sense it may have seemed a needless path, or a foolish path, or a perilous path. There may have been many to criticize and abuse. The only stay of the heart has been the deep conviction that the way was God's way, and that in the end it would approve itself such. This truth, that the way of faith in God is the way of safety, is amply illustrated in the following chapter. Whatever the believer may lose, he keeps the chief treasure.

III. THE ENDURANCE OF THE JUST MAN. There must be perseverance in the way of faith. There must be a readiness to wait on God's time. Therefore it is that we are warned on trying to enter the life of faith. Can we go on believing even though our present life be full of adversity? Our faith must continue against the persuasions of worldly success and through the pains of all suffering to the flesh. It is to the prophet Habakkuk the writer refers in reminding us how the just by faith lives; and that just man of the prophet keeps his faith even though the fig tree do not blossom, nor fruit be in the vines; though the labour of the olive fail, and the fields yield no meat; though the flock is cut off from the fold, and there is no herd in the stalls.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1.—Now faith is the substance (so A.V., with marginal readings, "or ground, or, confidence") of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. On the senses in which the word *ὑπόστασις* (translated "substance") may be used, see under ch. i. 2. As to the sense intended here, views differ. There are three possible ones, expressed in the text and margin of the A.V., *substance*, *ground*, and *confidence*. The first is understood by the Fathers generally, the idea being supposed to be that, inasmuch as things not yet experienced, but only hoped for, become real to us by faith, faith is metaphysically their substance, as substantiating them to us. So Theophilus: *Οὐσίᾳ τῶν μὴ ὄντων, ὑπόστασις τῶν μὴ φερόμενων*: and Chrysostom, who illustrates thus: "The resurrection has not yet taken place, but faith substantiates (*φερέτω*) it in our souls." So also Dante, following St. Thomas Aquinas, in a striking passage quoted by Delitzsch ('Paradiso, xxiv. 70—75)—

"Le profondo cose

Che mi largiscono qui la lor parvenza
Agli occhi di laggiù son sì nascose,
Che l'esser loro v'è in sola credenza,
Sovra la qual si fonda l'alta spene:
E però di sustanza prendo l'intenza."

"The things profound
That here vouchsafe to me their apparition
From all eyes here below are so concealed
That all their being is in faith alone,
Upon the which high hope doth base itself:
And therefore faith assumes the place of
substance."

The rendering *ground*, which involves only the simpler idea of faith being the foundation on which hope is built, has not much

support from the use of the word elsewhere, nor does it seem suitable here. For it is not the things hoped for, but rather our hopes of them, that are grounded on our faith. The subjective sense, *confidence*, or *assurance*, is most in favour with modern commentators, principally as being the most usual one (cf. ch. iii. 14; 2 Cor. ix. 4; xi. 17; also Ps. xxxviii. 11, 'Ἡ ὑπόστασις μου παρὰ σοῦ ἔστιν: Ezek. xix. 5, 'Ἀνάλετο ἡ ὑπόστασις αὐτῆς: Ruth i. 12, 'Ἐστὶ μοι ὑπόστασις τοῦ γενεθῆναι με ἀνδρὶ). One objection to this sense of the word here is that it is usually followed, when so intended, by a genitive of the person, not of the thing; though Ruth i. 12 is an instance to the contrary. But apart from this consideration, the consensus of the Greek Fathers is a weighty argument for the retention of the rendering of the A.V. Either rendering, be it observed, gives the same essential meaning, though under different mental conceptions. Faith is further said to be *the evidence* of things not seen; *ἔλεγχος* meaning, not as some take it, inward conviction of their existence, but in itself a *demonstration*, serving the purpose of argument to induce conviction. So Dante, in continuation of the passage quoted above—

"E da questa credenza ci conviene
Silogizar senza avere altra vïa;
E però intenza d'argomento tione."

"And from this credence it is fit and right
To syllogize, though other sight be none:
Therefore faith holds the place of argu-
ment."

Is this meant as a *definition* of faith, or only a description of its effect and operation, with especial regard to the subject in hand? Virtually a definition, though not in the strict logical form of one. At any rate, "the constituents and essential cha-

acteristics of faith are here laid down" (Delitzsch); i.e. of faith in its most general sense—that of belief in such things, whether past, present, or future, as are not known by experience, and cannot be logically demonstrated. "Licet quidam dicant prædicta apostoli verba non esse fidei definitionem, quia definitio indicat rei quidditatem et essentiam, tamen si quis recte consideret, omnia ex quibus fides potest definiri in prædicta descriptione tanguntur, licet verba non ordinentur sub forma definitionis" (St. Thomas Aquinas, 'Secunda Secundæ,' qu. 4, art. 1). Faith, in the general sense indicated, is and has ever been, as the chapter goes on to show, the very root and inspiring principle of all true religion. And be it observed that, if well grounded, it is not irrational; it would rather be irrational to disregard it, or suppose it opposed to reason. Even in ordinary affairs of life, and in science too, men act, and must act, to a great extent on faith; it is essential for success, and certainly for all great achievements—faith in the testimony and authority of others whom we can trust, faith in views and principles not yet verified by our own experience, faith in the expected outcome of right proceeding, faith with respect to a thousand things which we take on trust, and so make ventures, on the ground, not of positive proof, but of more or less assured conviction. Religious faith is the same principle, though exercised in a higher sphere; and it may be as well grounded as any on which irreligious men are acting daily. Various feelings and considerations may conspire to induce it: the very phenomena of the visible universe, which, though themselves objects of sense, speak to the soul of a Divinity beyond them; still more, conscience, recognized as a Divine voice within us, and implying a Power above us to whom we are responsible; then all our strange yearnings after ideals not yet realized, our innate sense that righteousness ought to triumph over iniquity, as in our disordered world it does not yet;—which things are in themselves prophetic: and, in addition to all this, the general human belief in Deity. And when, further, a revelation has been given, its answering to our already felt needs and aspirations, together with the usual considerations on which we give credence to testimony, induces faith in it also, and in the things by it revealed; natural faith is thus confirmed, and faith in other verities is borne in upon the soul; which is further itself confirmed by experience of the effects of entertaining it. In some minds, as is well known, and these of the highest order, such faith may amount to certitude, rendering the "things unseen" more real

to them than "the things that do appear." It cannot be said that to accept such faith as evidence is contrary to reason; our not doing so would be to put aside as meaning nothing the deepest, the most spiritual, the most elevating faculties of our mysterious nature, by means of which, no less than by our other faculties, we are constituted so as to apprehend the truth. And we may observe, lastly, that even to those who have not themselves this "fulness of faith," its very existence in others, including so many of the great and good, may surely be rationally accepted as evidence of realities corresponding to it.

Ver. 2.—For in this (i.e. *faith*, *ἡ πίστις*) the elders obtained a good report; literally, *were witnessed of*; i.e. it was in respect of their faith, which inspired their deeds, that they were praised. (For a similar use of the preposition *ἐν*, cf. 1 Cor. xi. 22, *ἡ παρουσία ἐν πίστει*). Thus is introduced the illustrative review of Old Testament instances, the purpose of which has been explained above. It begins from the beginning, Abel being the first example. But in the Old Testament the account of the creation precedes that first recorded instance; and, therefore, it is in the first place fittingly referred to, the existence of an unseen creative power mentally perceived beyond things visible, being the primary article—the very foundation—of all religious faith (cf. below, ver. 6).

Ver. 3.—By faith we perceive that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen (or, *that which is seen*) have (or, *has*) not been made of things which do appear. "By the word of God" has reference to "and God said," of Gen. i., which chapter enunciates the primary article of all definite religious faith, viz. the existence and operation of God, as the unseen Author of the visible universe. Even without a revelation to declare this, faith's office is to apprehend it from observation of the phenomena themselves; as is intimated in Rom. i. 20, where even to the Greek "the invisible things of God from the creation of the world" are said to be "clearly seen, being understood [*νοούμενα*: cf. *νοούμεν* in the passage before us] by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." The drift of both passages is the same, viz. this, and no more—that faith recognizes an unseen "power and Godhead" behind, and accounting for, the seen universe. Commentators, who—taking *μὴ ἐκ φανερού* as equivalent to *ἐκ μὴ φανερού*, and hence seeking to explain what is meant by "non-apparent things"—perceive here a reference either to the formless void (Gen. i. 2) out of which the present creation was evolved, or to the Platonic conception of eternal ideas in the

Divine mind, read into the text what is not there.

Ver. 4.—By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which (i.e. faith, not sacrifice, "faith" being the ruling idea of the whole passage) he obtained witness (literally, *was witnessed of*) that he was righteous, God testifying of (literally, *witnessing upon, or, in respect to*) his gifts: and through it (faith) he being dead yet speaketh. In the traditions preserved in Genesis of the dim and distant antediluvian period, three figures stand out prominently as representing the righteous seed in the midst of growing evil—Abel, Enoch, and Noah. These are, therefore, first adduced with the view of showing that it is in respect of faith that they are thus distinguished in the sacred record. With respect to Abel, it is not necessary to inquire or conjecture whether the bloody character of his offering is to be considered as constituting its superior excellence. The record in Genesis simply represents the two brothers as offering each what he had to offer in accordance with his occupation and pursuits, the only difference being that Abel is said to have offered his *firstlings* and the *fat* thereof, while nothing is said of Cain having brought his firstfruits or his best. Then, in the account of the result, we are only told that unto one the Lord had respect, and not to the other, without mention of the reason why. It is usual to find a reason in the nature of Abel's offering as signifying atonement, and to suppose his faith manifested in his recognition of the need of such atonement, signified to him, as has been further supposed, by Divine command. This view of the intention of the narrative is indeed suggested by the description of what his offering was, viewed in the light of subsequent sacrificial theory; but it is not apparent in the narrative taken by itself, or in the reference to it in the passage before us. The acceptableness of the offering is here simply attributed, as of necessity, to the faith of the offerer, without any intimation of how that faith had been evinced. And with this view of the matter agrees the record itself, where it is said that "unto Abel and his offering the Lord had respect;" i.e. to Abel first, and then to his offering—the offering was accepted because Abel was, not Abel on account of his kind of offering. "Omne quod datur Deo ex dantis mente pensatur . . . Neque enim sacrum eloquium dicit, Respexit ad munera Abel et ad Cain munera non respexit, sed prius ait quia respexit ad Abel, ac deinde subiunxit, 'et ad munera ejus.' Idcirco non Abel ex muneribus, sed ex Abel munera oblata placuerunt" (St. Gregory, quoted by Delitzsch). "And he being

dead," etc., refers plainly to Gen. iv. 10, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." The same voice of innocent blood, which appealed at the beginning of human history to the God of righteousness, cries still through all the ages; it sounds in our own ears now, telling us that faith prevails on high, and that "right dear in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Cf. ch. xii. 24 for an allusion again to the cry of the blood of Abel. The word λαλεῖν is there also used, supporting the reading λαλεῖ, rather than the λαλεῖται of the Textus Receptus here.

Ver. 5.—By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God; literally, *hath been witnessed of that he had been well-pleasing to God*. The allusion is, of course, to the testimony in Genesis (v. 24), the LXX. being closely followed, which has, Εὐηρέστησεν Ἐνὸχ τῷ Θεῷ, καὶ οὐχ ἠρέσκετο διδοῖν μετέσθην αὐτὸν ὁ Θεός, whereas the literal translation of our Hebrew text is, "Enoch walked with God; and he was not, because God took him."

Ver. 6.—But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. The purpose of this verse, in connection with the conclusion of the last, is to show that the Scripture record does imply faith in Enoch, though there is no mention of it there by name: it is of necessity involved in the phrase, εὐηρέστησεν τῷ Θεῷ. The expression in the Hebrew, "walked with God" (be it observed), involves it equally; so that the argument is not affected by the quotation being from the LXX.

Ver. 7.—By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear (εὐλαβηθεὶς), prepared an ark to the saving of his house; through which (i.e. faith) he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith (κατὰ πίστιν). The "things not seen as yet" were the divinely predicted events of the Deluge. The word εὐλαβηθεὶς (translated as above in the A.V.) is taken by many commentators as implying godly fear, a sentiment of piety, with reference to the previous χρηματισθεὶς, since the noun εὐλαβεία seems to have this special sense in ch. xii. 28, μετὰ φόβου καὶ εὐλαβείας (see what was said under ver. 7, where the word occurred); so too the adjective, εὐλαβής, Luke ii. 25; Acts ii. 5; viii. 2. Hence the emendation, "moved with godly fear," in the recent "Revised Version." But, inasmuch as the verb εὐλαβεῖσθαι has in the New Testament, as elsewhere, only its ori-

gual import of caution or circumspection, there is no need to suppose here a further meaning (cf. Acts xiii. 10, the only other passage in the New Testament where the verb occurs). Ebrard, taking only prudent forethought to be expressed, enlarges on the lesson thus conveyed to the effect that he who acts on simple faith, regardless of the world's opinion or of ridicule, is the one who is truly prudent. And we may add that such prudence legitimately comes in as a motive in the religious life. The antecedent of "which" (ὅς ἥ), though the ancients generally understand *καὶ βάρδης*, is taken as above by most moderns; the reason being, not only that *faith* (see in ver. 4) is the ruling idea of the whole passage, but also that it suits better the expressed results, especially the second, "became heir," etc. For to say that he became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith through the ark, as being the evidence of his faith, or as being the means of his preservation, is less intelligible than to say that through faith he became so. The sense in which Noah "condemned the world" is illustrated by Matt. xii. 41, 42, "The men of Nineveh," etc., "The queen of the South," etc. (cf. Rom. ii. 27). His becoming "heir," etc., rests on the view of the fulfilment of primeval promise being transmitted as an inheritance to the faithful. Noah, as he appears in Genesis, was eminently heir in this sense, as alone in his day appropriating it and as transmitting it to his seed. In like manner Abraham, who is next mentioned, was the prominent heir among the subsequent patriarchs (cf. Rom. iv. 13). The idea running through the whole Old Testament is that, in the midst of a sinful world, an inheritance of salvation was transmitted through a chosen seed, till the Christ should come as the "Heir of all things," the perfected Head and Representative of all redeemed humanity. The word *δικαιοσύνη*, as that of which Noah was heir, may have been suggested with reference to him by his being the first who is called *δικαίος* in Genesis (vi. 9), and by this being his usual designation (Ezek. xiv. 14, 20; Ecclus. xlv. 17; Wisd. x. 4, 6, Sir. xlv. 17; cf. 2 Pet. ii. 5, *καὶ ἡ δικαιοσύνη*). The whole phrase, *τῆς κατὰ πίστιν δικαιοσύνης*, may be taken to imply the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith, which may be supposed to have been familiar to the readers of this Epistle, having been already fully enunciated by St. Paul, and dwelt on by him as especially exemplified in Abraham. St. Paul, indeed, does not use this exact phrase, but *δικαιοσύνης πίστις* (Rom. iv. 11, 13); *ἐκ πίστεως* (Rom. x. 6); *ἐν τῇ πίστει* (Phil. iii. 9); but still the meaning may be the same. The correspondence is an

instance of Pauline thought in this Epistle, while the difference of phrase affords a presumption, though by no means in itself conclusive, against Pauline authorship.

Ver. 8.—By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed (literally, *when called, obeyed to go out*, etc.); and he went out, not knowing whither he went. The reference is to the first call of Abraham (Gen. xii. 1), his obedience to which is the first instance of the faith which the whole life of the father of the faithful so eminently exemplifies. The fact of the place he was to go to being so far unrevealed (intimated only as "a land that I will show thee") enhances the faith displayed. He followed the Divine voice as it were blindly, not seeing whither it was leading him, knowing only that it was right to follow it. So to those who walk by faith now the future may be unknown or dim.

"Lead thou me on.

... I do not ask to see,"

The distant scene; one step enough for me."

Vers. 9, 10.—By faith he sojourned in (rather, *went to sojourn in*) the land of promise, as in a strange country (literally, *as one belonging to others*; i.e. not his own; "As in an alien land" (Wickliffe); cf. Gen. xxiii. 4, "I am a stranger and sojourner with you"), dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations (literally, *the foundations*) whose Builder and Maker is God. Of course, here, "*with Isaac and Jacob*" means "*as did also Isaac and Jacob*." The three successive patriarchs are presented in Scripture as representing the period of nomadic life in the land of promise, not yet possessed; alike supported by faith in the Divine word; and hence they are ever grouped together (cf. Gen. xviii. 13; xxii. 9; xlviii. 15; 1. 24; Exod. iii. 6; Deut. ix. 5; 1 Kings xviii. 36, etc.; also Matt. xxii. 32; Luke xiii. 28). The meaning of their history to us, and the object of their common hope, are further set forth in vers. 13—17, and will be under them considered. In the mean time an instance of Abraham's faith, peculiar to himself, is adduced.

Vers. 11, 12.—By faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, even when she was past age (*ἔρεκεν*, as in the Textus Receptus, after *καὶ παρὰ καὶ τὴν ἡλικίαν*, may be rejected, being, perhaps, an interpolation suggested by *καὶ*), because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the

sea-shore innumerable. The vitality of Abraham's faith is represented as evinced by its surviving and triumphing over a succession of trials, over apparent impossibilities. One such peculiar trial was the long delay of the birth of a legitimate heir through whom the promise of an innumerable seed might be fulfilled, and this till it seemed out of the question in the natural course of things. Yet "he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, . . . being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able to perform" (see Rom. iv. 17—23, which is a fuller statement of the idea of this verse, including the use of the words *πεπεισμένος* and *πιστός* to express effectiveness, and *ἰσχυαίωσθαι*, corresponding to *δυναμὴ λαβεῖν* here. This is a further instance of Pauline thought in this Epistle—ideas already enlarged on by St. Paul being taken for granted as understood.) In Romans Abraham's faith in this regard is treated as typifying Christian faith in the resurrection from the dead (ver. 24), as is also, in the chapter before us (ver. 19), his faith displayed on the occasion of the offering of Isaac. For to us also our inability to conceive the mode of accomplishment of what well-grounded faith assures us of is no just cause for staggering. "How are the dead raised up? and with what kind of body do they come?" was asked by the Corinthian doubters. St. Paul directs them, in reply, to faith in "the power of God" (cf. Mark xii. 24) to accomplish his purposes and fulfil his promises in ways unknown to us, transcending, though analogous to, the mysterious processes of nature that we see before our eyes. For "with God all things are possible." Sarah is here joined with Abraham, as also "receiving power" by faith, i.e. her own faith, as the structure of ver. 11 seems evidently to imply. But how is this consistent with the account of her in Genesis, where she is nowhere held up as an example of faith; nay, is censured for incredulity (Gen. xviii. 12—16) with respect to the promise of offspring? The answer may be that her temporary unbelief is concluded to have been succeeded by faith, as proved by the result, viz. that she "received power." And, indeed, her laughter recorded in Gen. xviii. does not seem intended to imply any permanent "heart of unbelief;" for even Abraham had laughed as she did when the same announcement had been previously made to him (Gen. xvii. 17), and the "laughter" associated with her memory has quite a different meaning given it when that of temporary incredulity was changed into that of joy on the birth of the promised son, who was consequently called Isaac (equivalent to "laughter"). It is, however, Abraham himself who is put prominently

before us as the great example of faith; Sarah is only introduced by his side (with the words *καὶ αὐτῇ*) as sharing it and co-operating to the result. To him singly the writer returns in ver. 12, *Αὐτὸ καὶ ἀπ' ἐνός*, etc.

Ver. 13.—These all (i.e. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the nomadic patriarchs, not including the antediluvian heroes, to whom what is further said does not apply) died in faith (literally, *according to faith*, *κατὰ πίστιν*, as in ver. 7), not having received the promises, but having seen and greeted them from afar off (omitting the ill-supported *καὶ παρούσας* of the Textus Receptus), and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. The reference is to the confession of Abraham to the sons of Heth (Gen. xxiii. 4), "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you," together with Jacob's words to Pharaoh (Gen. xlvii. 9), "The days of the years of my pilgrimage," etc. The import of such confession, intimated in the preceding part of the verse, is now deduced.

Vers. 14—16.—For they that say such things declare plainly (or, *make manifest*) that they seek a country (i.e. a native country, a fatherland, *πατρίδα*). And truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now (i.e. as it is) they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God (see *refra.* under ver. 9): for he hath prepared for them a city. In consideration of the drift of the whole of this interesting and suggestive passage (vers. 9, 10, 13—17), the question arises whether the patriarchs are represented as actually themselves looking forward to a heavenly inheritance. In their history as given in Genesis, as, indeed, in the Old Testament generally (at any rate, in the earlier books), there is, as is well known, no distinct recognition of the life to come. The promise to Abraham seems to imply only an innumerable seed, its possession as a great nation of the earthly land of promise, and through it some undefined blessing to all the families of the earth. Nor are the patriarchs represented as looking forward to a fulfilment of the promise beyond the limits of the present world. Even so their history is singularly instructive. They lived in hope of things not seen through faith in the Divine promise. The very fact that they were content to die without themselves attaining, if so God's purpose might be accomplished to their seed, invests them with a peculiar grandeur of unselfishness. Their faith was essentially the same principle as that of Christians, even though the final object of Christian hope were hidden from their eyes; while their dwelling in

tents as strangers, and the home and city seen afar off, are apt emblems of the present life and the heavenly citizenship of Christians. It may be that this is all that is intended in the Epistle, the history being allegorized, as that of Isaac and Ishmael is in the Epistle to the Galatians. If so, the apparent attribution of a heavenly hope to the patriarchs themselves must be accounted for by a blending of the actual history with its ideal meaning, such as was observed in the chapter about Melchizedek. But it is difficult to understand the expressions used as implying no more than this. Abraham is said to have himself looked for the "city that hath the foundations," of which God is the Builder—a description which cannot but denote the "heavenly Jerusalem," of which the city whose foundations were on the holy hills below is regarded elsewhere as but a type and emblem (cf. ch. xii. 22; xiii. 14; Gal. iv. 26; Rev. xxi. 14; also *infra*, ch. viii. 2, where ἡ ἑρμηνεία τοῦ Θεοῦ is said of the heavenly tabernacle). This interpretation is further supported by our finding in Philo similar views of a heavenly counterpart to Jerusalem as the final object of Israel's hope. Again, the country desired by the patriarchs is, in ver. 16, distinctly called a heavenly one. Nor is the view at all untenable that, notwithstanding the silence of the ancient record on the subject, they did look forward to a life after death with God, seeing in the promised earthly inheritance an emblem and earnest of a heavenly one. Well known is Bishop Warburton's argument that a belief in a future state, which was so ancient and universal, and so prominent especially in the religion of Egypt, must almost of necessity have been shared in by the race of Abraham, and hence that the silence about it in the Mosaic record must be due, not to its absence from the creed of Israel, but to the peculiar purpose of the Mosaic dispensation. Worthy of attention also are Dean Stanley's words (Lect. vii. on 'Jewish Church'): "Not from want of religion, but (if one might use the expression) from excess of religion, was this void left. The future life was not denied or contradicted, but it was overlooked, set aside, overshadowed, by the consciousness of the living, actual presence of God himself."¹

¹ One reason of the absence from the Mosaic code of the doctrine of a future state may have been the corruption of that doctrine, and the superstitions connected with it, in the popular Egyptian religion. If in that religion, as seems to have been the case, there was an elaborate system of ritual for securing the soul's welfare after death, it may have been good for the Israelites, at

But though such void there is, however to be accounted for, there are still, even in the Pentateuch (as certainly in the Psalms and prophets), occasional glimpses of the hope of immortality. The mystic tree of life in the midst of the garden, the predicted bruising of the serpent's head, the mystery of Enoch's departure from the world, and notably (as our Lord himself points out) God still calling himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob after they had been long ago gathered to their fathers, are intimations, even in the Pentateuch, of a belief in man's immortal hopes. And it may be added, with reference to the history immediately before us, that Jacob's application of the idea of his being a "sojourner"—used by Abraham with reference to the abode in Palestine—to the whole course of his life upon the earth, in itself suggests the meaning attached to such language in the Epistle. Hence no violence is done to the meaning of the history, rather it may be that its deeper meaning is brought out, if the patriarchs are regarded as entertaining a hope of a heavenly inheritance to themselves, and seeing beyond the earthly types. But even if we suppose such immortal hopes as having been in them at the most but vague and dim, still their faith in and longing for a fulfilment of the promise in any sense was really a feeling and reaching after the eternal realities which the first fulfilment typified. Compare the view taken in ch. iv. of the meaning of "God's rest." Delitzsch thus enunciates this view of the passage before us: "The promise given to the patriarchs was a Divine assurance of a future rest. That rest was connected, in the first instance, with the future possession of an earthly home; but their desire for that home was at the same time a longing and a seeking after Him who had given the promise of it, whose presence and blessing alone made it for them an object of desire, and whose presence and blessing, however vouchsafed, makes the place of its manifestation to be indeed a heaven. The shell of their longing might thus be of earth; its kernel was heavenly and Divine, and as such God himself vouchsafed to honour and reward it."

From the general mode of life of the patriarchs the review now passes to particular acts of faith, beginning with Abraham's memorable one, the offering of Isaac.

Vers. 17—19.—By faith Abraham, when

first at least, to be exclusively directed to a sense of their responsibility to a God of righteousness during life, lest their hope of future reward should be mixed up with the superstitious conceptions they had become so familiar with in Egypt.

he was tried, offered up (literally, *hath offered up*, denoting an accomplished act of which the significance continues) Isaac; and he that had received (rather, *accepted*, implying his own assent and belief) the promises offered up his only begotten son, he to whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God is able to raise up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure. The above rendering varies slightly from the A. V. in vers. 18, 19. For, in ver. 18, *πρὸς τὸν* is more naturally connected with the immediate antecedent, *ὁ ἀναβεβήμενος*, than with *μονογενῆς*; and, in ver. 19, there is no need to supply "him" after *ἐψηφείν*: the Greek seems obviously to express belief in God's general power to raise from the dead, not his power in that instance only. The offering of Isaac (specially instanced also by St. James, ii. 21), stands out as the crowning instance of Abraham's faith. The very son, so long expected, and at length, as it were, supernaturally given,—he in whose single life was bound up all hope of fulfilment of the promise, was to be sacrificed after all, and so seemingly all hope cut off. Yet Abraham is represented as not hesitating for a moment to do in simple faith what seemed God's will, and still not wavering in his hope of a fulfilment somehow. Such faith is here regarded as virtually faith in God's power even to raise the dead. (For a similar view of Abraham's faith as representing "the hope and resurrection of the dead," comp. Rom. iv. 17, 24.) The expression, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (literally, "In Isaac shall be called to thee a seed"), quoted from Gen. xxi. 12, means, not that the seed should be called after the name of Isaac, but that the seed to be called Abraham's should be in Isaac, *i.e.* his issue. The concluding phrase, "Whence also he received him in a figure" (literally, "in a parable," *ἐν παραβολῇ*), has been variously interpreted. Notwithstanding the authority of many modern commentators, we may certainly reject the view of *παραβολῇ* carrying here the sense borne by the verb *παραβάλλεσθαι*, that of venturing or exposing one's self to risk, or that of the adverb *παραβόλως*, unexpectedly. Even if the noun *παραβολή* could be shown by any instance to bear such senses, its ordinary use in the New Testament as well as in the LXX. must surely be understood here. It expresses (under the idea of comparison, or setting one thing by the side of another) an illustration, representation, or figure of something. Its use in this sense in the Gospels is familiar to us all; elsewhere in the New Testament it occurs only in this Epistle, ch. ix. 9, where the "first tabernacle" is spoken of as a *παραβολή*. Still,

the question remains of the exact drift of this expression, *ἐν παραβολῇ*. It surely is, that, though Isaac did not really die, but only the ram in his stead, yet the transaction represented to Abraham an actual winning of his son from the dead; he did so win him in the way of an acted parable, which confirmed his faith in God's power to raise the dead as much as if the lad had died. For such use of the preposition *ἐν* we may compare 1 Cor. xiii. 12, *βλέπομεν δι' ὁσπίτρου ἐν ἀνύμνῳ*, which may mean (notwithstanding the different view of it given doubtfully by the distinguished commentator on the Epistle in the 'Speaker's Commentary'), "We see, not actually, but in the way of an enigmatical representation, as through a mirror." The above seems a more natural meaning of the phrase, *ἐν παραβολῇ*, than that of the commentators who interpret it "in such sort as to be a parable or type of something else to come," *viz.* of the death and resurrection of Christ. It does not, of course, follow that the transaction was not typical of Christ, or that the writer does not so regard it; we are only considering what his language in itself implies. Rendered literally, and with retention of the order of the words, the sentence runs: "From whence [*i.e.* from the dead] him [*i.e.* Isaac, *αὐτόν* being slightly emphatic, as is shown by its position in the sentence, equivalent to *illum*, not *eum*; and this suitably after the general proposition proceeding] he did too in a parable win [*ἐκομίσαστο*, equivalent to *εἰς ἀκquisivit*; cf. ver. 39, *οὐκ ἐκομίσαντο τὴν ἑραγγελίαν*]." With regard to what we may call the moral aspect of this peculiar trial of Abraham's faith, a few words may be said, since a difficulty naturally suggests itself on the subject. How, it may be asked, is it consistent with our ideas of Divine righteousness, that even readiness to slay his son should be required of Abraham as a duty? How are we to account for this apparent sanction of the principle of human sacrifices? To the latter question we may reply, in the first place, that the narrative in Genesis, taken as a whole, affords no such sanction, but very much the contrary. All we are told is that the great patriarch, in the course of his religious training, was once divinely led to suppose such a sacrifice to be required of him. The offering of sons was not unusual in the ancient races among whom Abraham lived; and, however shocking such a practice might be, and however condemned in later Scripture, it was due, we may say, to the perversion only of a true instinct of humanity—that which suggests the need of some great atonement, and the claim of the Giver of all to our best and dearest, if demanded from us. That Abraham should be even divinely led to suppose for a time

that his God required him to express his acknowledgment of this need and this claim by not withholding from him as much as even the heathen were accustomed to offer to their gods, is consistent with God's general way of educating men to a full knowledge of the truth. But the sacrifice was in the end emphatically forbidden by a voice from heaven; to Abraham thenceforth, and to his seed for ever, it was made clearly known that, though God does require atonement for sin and entire submission to his will, he does not require violence to be done to tender human feeling, or any cruel rites.

Ver. 20.—By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even (or, also) concerning things to come. Here the word *et* (omitted in the Textus Receptus) gives force to what is meant; words uttered by the patriarchs in the spirit of prophecy being now adduced as further evidence of their faith. To those inspired by this spirit even the distant future is realized as present; and faith is not only a condition of such prophetic visions being granted to them, but is also evinced by their trusting the visions as Divine revelations, and speaking with confidence accordingly. The prophet seems as though able himself to control the future by giving or withholding blessing (cf. Jer. i. 10); but it is really that his mind and will are at one with the mind and will of God: a Divine voice speaks within him, and through faith he is receptive of it and gives it utterance. Thus it was that even the future characters, and changing relations to each other, of the yet unborn races of Israel and Edom are represented as having been foreshadowed in the blessings of that dying patriarch.

Ver. 21.—By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. Here two distinct incidents are referred to, both at the close of Jacob's life. That first mentioned, the blessing of the sons of Joseph (Gen. xlviii. 2), closely resembles the dying act of Isaac already spoken of, and has a similar significance. In both cases, too, human intention is overruled, in that the younger son obtains the higher blessing; and each patriarch accepts alike the Divine intimation to this effect, thus further evincing faith in a power and a will above his own. The latter part of the verse, "and worshipped," etc., is quoted from Gen. xlvii. 31, and refers to a previous instance of the dying Jacob's faith, in his charge to Joseph to bury him with his fathers in the land of promise. The reversal in the text of the historical order of the two instances may be because the one referred to first is cognate with the instance of Isaac's faith which has gone before, the

other with that of Joseph's which follows. For the benedictions of Isaac and Jacob, when a-dying, expressed faith in revelations made to them about the several races of their future seed; the deathbed charges of Jacob and Joseph expressed faith in the chosen seed's inheritance of the promised land. Though in the verse before us Jacob's charge to Joseph, with a view to this inheritance, is not mentioned, yet the quotation from the account of it in Genesis, "and worshipped," etc., would be sufficient, in this concise summary of instances, to recall it to the mind of readers, and so intimate the writer's meaning. The variation of the LXX., which is here followed as usual, from the Massoretic text, in reading "staff" instead of "bed," is due to the ambiguity of the Hebrew word, which has one meaning or the other according to its pointing. "Bed" seems more likely to have been intended, inasmuch as the bed on which the patriarch lay is twice again mentioned (Gen. xlviii. 2; xlix. 33) in the account of the closing scene; and we find also a similar expression used of David in his old age (1 Kings i. 47). But the variation is unimportant, the essence of the passage being in the word translated "bowed himself," which in the Hebrew as well as the Greek certainly expresses an act of worship. The only difference is that, according to one rendering, this worship was expressed by his bowing over the staff on which he leant as he sat upon the bed (Gen. xlviii. 2); according to the other, by his turning round to prostrate himself with his head upon the pillow. The view of some of the Fathers, who, adopting the LXX. rendering and supposing the staff to be Joseph's, regard the act as expressing reverence to Joseph himself, in fulfilment of Gen. xxxviii. 5—11, has little probability in its favour, and is controverted by St. Augustine. But so Chrysostom, and apparently Theodoret. And suitably to this idea, the Vulgate has in Hebrews, "et adoravit fastigium virgæ ejus," though in Genesis, "adoravit Israhel Deum, conversus ad lectuli caput." Quite untenable, and only worthy of mention because of the use that has been made of it in support of image-worship, is the idea that Joseph's staff was surmounted by some sacred image which Jacob adored.

Ver. 22.—By faith Joseph, when dying, made mention of the departing (*Exodus*) of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones. The reference is to Gen. i. 24, 25, which, after what has been said above, requires no further comment.

Ver. 23.—By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw that he was a proper (*doctus*, the word used of the child in Exod. ii. 2, there translated "goodly," and

in Acts vii. 20, "fair") child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. Here the usual following of the LXX. again appears in the hiding being attributed to both parents (this is certainly the meaning of *πατέρας*, not—as some interpret because of the masculine form—father and grandfather). In the Hebrew it is the mother only that is spoken of as hiding him; whereas in the LXX. the verbs are in the plural, *ἔκρυψεν δὲ*, etc., though with no expressed nominative. It is not necessary to understand a special faith in the fulfilment of the promises through the child thus hidden to be implied, though it may be so intended. But the mere fearlessness in obeying the dictates of heart and conscience in the face of danger, and the mere reliance on Providence, thus displayed, expressed faith.

Vers. 24—26.—By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in (or, of) Egypt; for he had respect unto (literally, *looked away to*) the recompense of reward. As in the speech of Stephen (Acts vii.), so here, the narrative in Exodus is supplemented from tradition, such as is found also in Philo. Moses' refusal to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, i.e. his renunciation of his position in the court in order to associate himself with his oppressed fellow-countrymen, is not mentioned in the original history, though it is consistent with it, and indeed implied. St. Stephen further regards his taking the part of the Israelite against the Egyptian (Exod. ii. 11—13) as a sign that he was already conscious of his mission, and hoped even then to rouse his countrymen to make a struggle for freedom. The reproach he subjected himself to by thus preferring the patriot's to the courtier's life is here called "the reproach of Christ." How so? Chrysostom takes the expression to mean only the same kind of reproach as Christ was afterwards subjected to, in respect of his being scouted, and his Divine mission disbelieved, by those whom he came to save. But, if the expression had been used with respect to Christians suffering for the faith (as it is below, ch. xiii. 13), it would certainly imply more than this; viz. a participation in Christ's own reproach, not merely a reproach like his. (Cf. 2 Cor. i. 5, *τὰ παθήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ*, and Col. i. 24, *τὸν θάνατον τοῦ Χριστοῦ*, where there is the further idea expressed of Christ himself suffering in his members.) And such being the idea which the phrase in itself would at once convey to Christian readers, and es-

pecially as the very same is used below (ch. xiii. 13) with reference to Christians, it must surely be somehow involved in this passage. But how so, we ask again, in the case of Moses? To get at the idea of the phrase we must bear in mind the view of the Old and New Testaments being but two parts of one Divine dispensation. The Exodus was thus not only typical of the deliverance through Christ, but also a step towards it, a preparation for it, a link in the divinely ordered chain of events leading up to the great redemption. Hence, in the first place, the reproach endured by Moses in furtherance of the Exodus may be regarded as endured at any rate *for the sake of Christ*, i.e. in his cause whose coming was the end and purpose of the whole dispensation. And further, inasmuch as Christ is elsewhere spoken of as the Head of the whole mystical body of his people in all ages—all to be gathered together at last in him—he may be regarded, even before his incarnation, as himself reproached in the reproach of his servant Moses. Compare the view, presented in ch. iii., of the Son being Lord of the "house" in which Moses was a servant, and the comprehensive sense of "God's house" implied in that passage. Nor should we leave out of consideration the identification, maintained by the Fathers generally (see Bull, 'Def. Fid. Nic.' I. i.), of the Angel of the Pentateuch, of him who revealed himself to Moses as I AM from the bush, with the Second Person of the holy Trinity, the Word who became incarnate in Christ. (Cf. John i. 1—15; also John viii. 58, read in connection with Exod. iii. 14; and 1 Cor. x. 4, where the spiritual rock that followed the children of Israel in the wilderness is said to have been Christ.) Whatever, however, be the exact import of the expression, "reproach of Christ" in its application to Moses, it is evidently selected here with the view of bringing his example home to the readers of the Epistle, by thus intimating that his faith's trial was essentially the same as theirs.

Ver. 27.—By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. This forsaking of Egypt must, because of the order in which it comes and of Moses alone being mentioned, be his flight related in Exod. ii. 15, not the final Exodus. The only seeming difficulty is in the expression, "not fearing the wrath of the king," whereas in the history Moses is represented as flying in fear from the face of Pharaoh, who sought to slay him. But the two views of his attitude of mind are reconcilable. The assertion of his fearlessness applies to his whole course of action from the time when he elected to brave the king in behalf of

Israel. In pursuance of this course, it became necessary for him to leave Egypt for a time. In this, as well as in staying, there was danger; for the king might pursue him: he might, perhaps, have secured his own safety by returning to the court and giving up his project; but he persevered at all hazards. And thus the apprehension of immediate danger under which he fled the country with a view to final success, was in no contradiction to his general fearlessness. Further, his being content to leave Egypt at all, and that for so many years, and still never relinquishing his design, was an additional evidence of faith, as is expressed by the word *ἐκάρησεν*, "he endured." The vision through faith of the unseen heavenly King kept alive his hope through those long years of exile: what was any possible wrath even of the terrible Pharaoh to one supported by that continual vision?

Ver. 28, 29.—By faith he kept (literally, *hath kept*, *ῥησολῆκεν*, the perfect being used rather than the historical aorist, as denoting an accomplished act, with continuing effect and significance (cf. *προσέτηροκεν*, ver. 17). But *ῥησολῆκεν* does not mean, as some suppose, "hath instituted," *ῥησολῆναι* being the usual expression for the celebration) the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. By faith they passed through the Red Sea, as by dry land; which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned. The faith of Moses himself is still mainly intended here, though the conjunction of *πιστεῖ* with *διέβησαν* seems to imply faith in the people too. Nor is this inconsistent with the narrative; for, though they are represented as having cried out in their sore fear, and even reproached their leader for bringing them out of Egypt to die in the wilderness, yet on his exhortation, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord," they may be supposed to have trusted him, and caught something of the inspiration of his faith. Moses, indeed, stands out as a prominent example (and this is one point in the moral teaching of his history) of the strong faith of one great man, not only availing in behalf of others, but also in some degree infecting a whole community, little disposed at first to make heroic ventures.

Ver. 30.—By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were compassed about seven days (see Josh. vi. 1—21). The capture of Jericho may be selected for mention, not only because of its extraordinary character, but also as being the beginning of the campaign in Canaan, the first necessary conquest that opened the way to the rest. The history is not further

pursued in detail, this being sufficient to suggest it all. Only, for a special reason, the case of Rahab has attention drawn to it.

Ver. 31.—By faith Rahab the harlot perished not with them that were disobedient, when she had received the spies with peace. Rahab is instanced also by St. James (ii. 25) as having shown her faith by works. Such special notice of her is accounted for by her being so remarkable an instance of a heathen, an alien, one of the very doomed Canaanite race, being through faith adopted into the commonwealth of Israel, so as even to become an ancestress of the Messiah (Matt. i. 5). Faith is thus exhibited as the acceptable principle of religious action, not in Israel only, but in all races, as in all times. Rahab's faith was in the omnipotence and supremacy of the God of Israel, induced by evidence of which she could not resist the force (Josh. ii. 9—12). Her consequent action was to protect the spies, of course with great risk to herself, lest she should oppose the Divine will as she believed it. Her fellow-countrymen had the same evidence before them; but it caused them only to lose courage and faint, not to act on faith at all, either in their own gods or in the Lord; hence they are here called "those who were disobedient (*τοῖς ἀπειθήσαντι*)," i.e. resisted God's will—the same expression as is used of the Israelites who fell in the wilderness (ch. iii. 18), and of the contemporaries of Noah (1 Pet. iii. 20; cf. Acts xix. 9). That Rahab was, at the time when she thus evinced her faith, a harlot (such is certainly the meaning of *πόρνη*); that she lied to the King of Jericho's messengers (Josh. ii. 4, 5); and that she treacherously aided the invaders of her country;—have been felt as difficulties with regard to the position assigned her among the faithful. In reply to such aspersions on her character, it is usual to allege as follows: As to her harlotry, there is no reason to suppose that her profession was held in any disrepute among the Canaanites, or that she was aware of there being any harm in it; and that, at any rate after her conversion, she became the honourable wife of a chief in Israel. As to her lying, strict truthfulness in all circumstances was not likely to be known to her as a necessary virtue; Michal, not to mention others, lied to Saul's messengers in order to save David's life, and even some Christian casuists allow falsehood in such cases. As to her treachery, what she held to be her religious duty properly took precedence of any sentiment of hopeless patriotism; and, after all, what she did was only to save the spies from a cruel death, not to correspond with the enemy or open the gates of her city to them. Such excuses

for what might seem amiss in her are valid. But the main point to be observed is this—that, whatever her enlightenment, as a heathen, in principles of morality familiar to us Christians, she stands out in the sacred record as having been saved and admitted into Israel on account of her faith in the one true God, and action in accordance with her faith. What is said of Jael (Dr. Arnold's 'Sermons on Interpretation of Scripture') may be still more said of her: "They who serve him honestly up to the measure of their knowledge are according to the general course of his providence encouraged and blessed; they whose eyes and hearts are still fixed upwards, on duty, not on self, are precisely that smoking flax which he will not quench, but cherish rather, till the smoke be blown into a flame." Be it observed, however, that Jael's murderous deed—much less easily defensible than Rahab's conduct—is nowhere adduced in the New Testament as an instance of faith. Among the names that follow here Barak is mentioned, but not Jael. The only ground for supposing her to be approved in Scripture is her being called "blessed" in Deborah's triumphal song, uttered in the flush of victory. But we are not bound to accept that "prophetic," however inspired for her peculiar mission, as an oracle on questions of morality.

Vers. 32—34.—And what shall I more say for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak and Samson and Jephthah; and of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power (*δύναμιν*) of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight (literally, *were made strong in war*), turned to flight armies of aliens. The names thus mentioned are meant as prominent specimens of the long array of Israel's heroes to the end of the sacred history, though, for the avoidance of prolixity, the list is not continued beyond the foundation of the kingdom under David and Samuel. Among the judges, Gideon is mentioned first, though he came after Barak, probably as being the most famous hero, as well as more remarkable in the history for faith and heroism. "The day of Midian" is referred to by Isaiah (ix. 4; x. 26) as the memorable triumph of ancient days. Hence (the arrangement of the *τε's* and *και's* of the Textus Receptus being retained) Gideon is first mentioned singly, and is succeeded by two groups—viz. Barak, Samson, and Jephthah, representing the period of the judges generally; then David and Samuel, representing that of the kings

and prophets. The deeds enumerated in the following verses need not be appropriated exclusively to particular heroes, but may be rather taken as denoting generally the kind of exploits by which faith was evidenced throughout the history. Some, however, seem to have special references, as the stopping of lions' mouths, and quenching the power of fire, to the incidents recorded in the Book of Daniel. "Escaped the edge of the sword," though peculiarly applicable to Elijah (cf. 1 Kings xix. 10, 14, "have slain thy prophets with the sword, and I, even I, only am left," etc.), has, of course, many other applications. Some see in "out of weakness were made strong" a special allusion to Samson's recovery of his strength, but it is better taken in general reference to the frequent instances of the weak things of this world being enabled through faith to confound the strong, and the few to prevail against the many. Numerous expressions to this effect in the Psalms, when the psalmist rises out of the depths of humiliation and weakness into confident reliance on Divine aid, will suggest themselves at once; and the instances of Gideon, Jonathan, David, and others, will occur readily to the mind. In the four concluding clauses of ver. 34 Delitzsch supposes the Maccabean heroes to be specifically alluded to—partly because of the word *παρεμβολή* being used here, as it is also frequently in 1 Maccabees, in the sense of "encamped army," instead of its proper and usual one of "camp" as in ch. xiii. 11, 13 (cf. Acts xxi. 10; xxiii. 10). This coincidence of usage does add to the probability that the Maccabean history, to which all the expressions are very suitable, was at any rate included in the writer's view. But in the history of Gideon too (Judg. vii. 2) the LXX. has *παρεμβολή* for the host encamped; *και ἔδραμεν πᾶσα ἡ παρεμβολή*. Allusion to Maccabees is more distinctly evident in ver. 35, as will be seen. The expression, "obtained promises (*ἐπιτυχον ἐπαγγελιών*)," surely expresses having promises fulfilled to them, not merely having promise made to them. "Promises" being in the plural, and without an article, so as to include all prophetic promises even of a temporal character, such as that to David that he should reign instead of Saul,—there is no need here to reconcile the assertion with that of ver. 39, "received not the promise (*οὐκ ἐκομίσαντο τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν*);" on which expression, however, see below.

Ver. 35.—Women received their dead raised to life again (literally, *from, or, out of resurrection*). The A.V. gives the sense in good English; only the force of the repetition of the word "resurrection" at the end of the verse is lost; and others were

tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. The first part of this verse evidently refers to 1 Kings xvii. 22 and 2 Kings iv. 36—the memorable instances in the Old Testament of mothers having had their sons restored to them from death. The latter part is as evidently suggested at least by the narrative of 2 Macc. vii.; where it is recorded how, under the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, seven sons of one mother were tortured and put to death; how one of them, in the midst of his tortures, having deliverance and advancement offered him if he would forsake the Law of his fathers, courageously refused the offer; and how both they and their mother, who encouraged them to persevere, reiterated their hope of a resurrection from the dead. The “better resurrection” means the resurrection to eternal life by them looked for, which was “better” than the temporary restoration to life in this world granted to the sons of the widow of Zarephath and the Shunammite; while the article in the Greek before “deliverance” (τῇ ἀπολύτρωσιν) may be due to the thought of that which is recorded to have been offered to those in the writer’s immediate view. There is some doubt as to the exact import of the word *ἐτυμπαίσθησαν* (translated “tortured”). The usual meaning of the Greek word is “to beat,” as a drum is beaten, from *τύμπανον*, a drum or drumstick; and *ἀποτυμπαίνειν* means “to beat to death.” But, inasmuch as the instrument of torture to which Eleazar (whose martyrdom is related in the preceding chapter of 2 Maccabees) was brought is called τὸ τύμπανον (vi. 19, 28), it has been supposed that the punishment referred to was the stretching of the victims, in the way of a rack, on a sort of wheel called a *tympa-num*, on which they were then beaten to death, as Eleazar was. So Vulgate, *distenti sunt*. The fact that the seven of 2 Macc. vii. were not so martyred, but by fire and other tortures, is not inconsistent with this view; for our author need not be supposed to confine his view to them, but uses the word suggested by Eleazar’s case. Whatever be the exact import of the word, the A.V. (“were tortured”) sufficiently gives the generally intended meaning.

Vers. 36—38.—And others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented (rather, evil-treated); (of whom the world was not worthy:) wandering in deserts, and mountains, and dens, and the caves of the earth. In this general review particular

cases may again have suggested some of the expressions used. The mention of “mockings” is prominent in the Maccabean history; “bonds and imprisonments” recall Hanani, Micaiah, and Jeremiah; “they were stoned” recalls Zachariah son of Jehoida (2 Chron. xxiv. 20; cf. Matt. xxiii. 35; Luke xi. 51; also Matt. xxiii. 37; Luke xiii. 34). “They wandered in sheepskins (μυλωναῖς) and in deserts” peculiarly suggests Elijah (his mantle being called μυλωνή; in the LXX., 2 Kings ii. 13, 14), though the Maccabean heroes also took refuge in “deserts and mountains” (1 Macc. ii.). “Sawn asunder” (denoting a mode of executing martyrs of which there is no instance in the Old Testament or Apocrypha) most probably refers to a well-known tradition about Isaiah, who is said to have so suffered under Manasseh. Alford thus gives the notices found elsewhere of this tradition: “Justin Martyr ‘Trypho,’ § 120; Tertullian, ‘Cont. Gnost. Scorpian,’ 8, and ‘De Patient,’ 14; Origen, ‘Ep. ad African.’; Lactantius, ‘Inst.’ iv. 11; Papias, ‘Vit. Proph.’; Augustine, ‘De Civ. Dei,’ xviii. 21; Jerome, on Isa. lvii. 1.” Jerome calls it a “certissima traditio apud Judæos,” and says that this passage in the Epistle was by most referred to the passion of Isaiah. The tameness and apparent unappropriateness of the verb *ἐπειράσθησαν* (“were tempted”) in ver. 36, in the midst of an enumeration of cruel modes of death, has led to a prevalent view that it is a corruption of the original text. Various conjectures have been made, the most tenable being (1) that it is an interpolation, arising from the repetition by some copyist of *ἐπειράσθησαν*, which was afterwards altered to *ἐπειράσθησαν*; or (2) that it is a substitution for some other word through error in transcription, the most likely conjecture as to the word originally written being *ἐπράσθησαν* or *ἐπυράσθησαν*, equivalent to “were burnt.” Either form, especially the latter, might easily be changed to *ἐπειράσθησαν*; and thus death by fire would have been originally included in the enumeration, which was likely to have been the case, especially since it is mentioned prominently in the account of the martyrdom of the seven sons. But, as there is no authority of any manuscript for a different word, this is mere conjecture; though the omission of the word altogether in some few manuscripts and versions, and variations of reading in others, suggest some uncertainty as to the original text. The word *ἐπειράσθησαν* if genuine, may possibly have been suggested by alliteration, and by thought of the temptations to apostasy prominent in the account both of Eleazar and of the seven sons.

Vers. 39, 40.—And these all, having ob-

tained a good report (literally, *having been witnessed of*, as in ver. 2) through faith, received not the promise: God having provided (or, *foreseen*) some better thing for (literally, *concerning*) us, that they without us should not be made perfect. There is no contradiction between the assertion here made, that none of the saints of old "received the promise (*ἐκομισαντο τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν*)" and its being said of Abraham (ch. vi. 15) that he did "obtain the promise (*ἔτυχε τῆς ἐπαγγελίας*)." For though in both passages "the promise," i.e. the great Messianic promise (not "promises," as in ver. 33, *supra*), is spoken of—or at any rate, in the case of Abraham, ultimately referred to—yet the verbs used are different and have different meanings. He "obtained" or attained to it, in the sense of having it confirmed and assured to him and his seed (see note on ch. vi. 15); but he did not actually get it so as to reduce it to possession and enter into the enjoyment of it. The realization of all that is meant by the word here used is, indeed, even to Christian

believers, still future (for cf. ch. x. 36, *ὅσα κομισήσθε τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν*). Nay, it is future also in its fulness, even to the saints at rest; for in the passage just quoted it is plainly intimated that the entire fulfilment will not be till "he that shall come" comes; i.e. till the second advent. The redeemed whose probation on earth is over are indeed, in one sense, said to be already "perfected" (cf. ch. x. 14; xii. 23); but still the "perfect consummation and bliss both in body and soul" is nowhere in the New Testament contemplated till "the end." In the mean time, even the saints under the heavenly altar still cry, "Lord, how long?" and the Spirit and the bride say, "Come, Lord Jesus." The full idea, then, of ver. 40 may be that, according to the eternal Divine purpose, the promise of redemption should not be fully realized till the number of the elect shall be accomplished, and all the redeemed of all ages since the world began shall be gathered together through Christ in one, and God shall be all in all.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—3.—*The nature and power of faith.* In the close of the previous chapter, the apostle has spoken of faith as the principle of spiritual life, and the spring of patient endurance. He has quoted a great saying from Habakkuk, "The just shall live by faith;" and he now proceeds to vindicate its truth in a series of brilliant biographical illustrations. First of all, however, the apostle supplies a theoretic definition or description of saving faith.

I. THE NATURE OF FAITH. (Ver. 1.) Faith is a natural principle of the mind. All men exercise it with regard to earthly things. But spiritual faith has for its objects a higher class of realities—the truths of religion revealed in the Bible. In the text this faith is looked at in the most general and comprehensive way. It is viewed, not so much as an act, but as a state of mind, and as antithetical to sight. 1. *Faith is the eye of the soul.* It is "the conviction of things not seen"—the organ by which we look upon the invisible and the eternal. And, if faith is the eye, the Bible is the eye-glass through which faith looks. The objects of spiritual faith are all supernaturally revealed truths—"the things of God," "the things of the Spirit." These embrace all the great truths concerning God, man, the way of salvation, the Church, the last things. The believer's conviction of these "things not seen" rests upon the testimony of God, given not only outwardly—by the lips and pens of inspired men, but inwardly—by the witness of the Spirit himself within the soul. "Seeing is believing" in the world of sense; but in the domain of faith this maxim is reversed, for in spiritual things "believing is seeing." 2. *Faith is the hand of the soul.* It is "the confidence of things hoped for." The universe of the unseen contains those glorious realities which are the objects of spiritual hope. And those realities faith grasps. Saving faith is appropriating faith. The "things hoped for" are all involved in the coming of Christ's kingdom, which shall bring with it the final triumph of truth over error, and of good over evil. They include also, in subordination to this crowning hope, whatever is necessary for the spiritual cleansing and culture and comfort of the individual believer; as e.g. the forgiveness of sins, peace with God, victory over indwelling evil, growing likeness to Christ, the communion of saints, and the prospect of a blessed immortality. The man whose heart reposes on these hopes will be no longer dominated by the things "which are seen" and "temporal." He will become heavenly-minded. His faith will make him the longer the more humble, pure, laborious, courageous, meek, long-suffering, forgiving. "The just shall live by faith."

II. THE FOUNDATION-DOCTRINE OF FAITH. (Ver. 3.) Here the author specifies, as one of the great objects of faith, what is really the fundamental truth of all religion, as it is also the first utterance of revelation (Gen. i. 1)—the doctrine of the creation of the world by the living God. For our knowledge of this truth we are indebted exclusively to the Bible. Human theories regarding the origin of the universe have been mere conjectures. Heathen philosophers have dreamed of the eternal existence of matter; or they have taught, in some form or other, the doctrine “that what is seen hath been made out of things which do appear.” Unaided reason has never ascended by the steps of the design-argument “up to nature’s God.” Paley’s famous illustration of the watch suggests a conclusive syllogism only to the Christian theist. What, then, does the apostle assert here regarding creation? 1. That all that exists in time and space was skilfully framed and finished by a simple fiat of the Almighty. 2. That it follows that the universe was not formed out of any pre-existing materials whatsoever, but was created by God out of nothing. The question of the mode in which “the worlds have been framed” is one, when regarded from the spiritual point of view, of very slight importance. It matters little whether “what is seen” assumed its present form in connection with a series of creative acts, or by a process of evolution. What faith lays stress on is this, that the universe is in no sense self-existent, but owes its genesis to the will of a personal Creator or Evolver. Ancient paganism deified the power of nature, and atheistic evolution in our own time sees in matter the “promise and potency” of all life. But the candid, sober confession of science still is, that “behind and above and around the phenomena of matter and of force, remains the unsolved mystery of the universe.” Now, revelation explains this mystery. The doctrine of a personal Creator is the foundation-doctrine of faith. If this truth be accepted, it follows that miracles are possible, and that a supernatural revelation is not an unlikely blessing. If God has made us in his own image, then surely we are heirs of immortality; and, although we have gone astray from him, peradventure he may hear us when we call upon him, and may graciously receive us back into his favour.

III. THE POWER OF FAITH TO FORM CHARACTER. (Ver. 2.) The “things not seen” and “hoped for” control the life of the believer. They engage his attention. They call forth his energies. They mould his habits. They direct his affections. The conviction and the confidence which make his character what it is are grounded, not upon knowledge, but upon testimony. This truth receives splendid illustration in the lives of the saints who lived during the twilight before the rise of the Sun of righteousness. “The elders” are the Hebrew fathers, and “the world’s grey fathers” of antediluvian times. They trusted in a Saviour who was yet only “hoped for,” and in a sacrifice for sin that was “not seen.” Although they lived so very long ago, and although the truth which they rested on was still but imperfectly developed, yet theirs was saving faith, and it was vigorous, valiant, victorious. For, faith is the belief of a Divine testimony, whatever that testimony may be. Under every dispensation the believer has ventured his eternal interests upon the bare word of God. “The elders had witness borne to them,” *i.e.* the approving testimony of God and his Word. And the apostle proceeds, in the verses which follow, to name some of these illustrious elders, and to show that their excellence of character was due to the moral power of their faith. This chapter, accordingly, may be said to point out some of the great constellations which blazed in the firmament of the Jewish dispensation. Or it may be compared to a national picture-gallery of the soldiers of faith, and their battles. Or its verses may be likened to the epitaphs on the ancient monuments in the fair and venerable abbey of the Old Testament Church.

In conclusion, have we this faith? The assent of the intellect to Bible truth is not enough. Faith for us means personal trust in a personal Saviour. Spiritual faith is a grace; it is God-given. Only the Holy Spirit can enable us to be guided, in our whole walk and conduct, by the unseen and eternal realities.

Vers. 4—7.—*Faith of the antediluvian saints.* The apostle, having gone to the first page of the Bible for the foundation-doctrine of faith, has only to turn the leaf to find his first historical illustrations.

I. THE EXAMPLE OF ABEL. (Ver. 4.) In what respect was Abel’s sacrifice “more excellent” than Cain’s? 1. Some answer—Because its materials were more valuable, and

also more carefully selected. Cain presented an oblation of vegetables, taking the first that came to hand; while Abel offered an animal sacrifice, and the choicest which his flock could supply. 2. Others judge that Abel's sacrifice was "more excellent" because of the living faith of which it was the expression. He worshipped in spirit and in truth; whereas Cain's offering was that of a formalist and a hypocrite. 3. But the true view, we apprehend, must go deeper than either of these. Abel's sacrifice was better, not merely because he brought it in faith, but because his faith led him to select an offering which was in itself more appropriate than that of Cain. "The Lord had respect unto Abel" for what he himself was, as reflected in what he gave (Gen. iv. 4). His offering, we may presume, was an act of faith resting upon the Divine testimony regarding "the seed of the woman," and the necessity of atonement by blood. But Cain, in presenting only fruit, declared thereby his disbelief in the gospel promise, and his repudiation of the appointed way of salvation. So, God bore visible witness to Abel "that he was righteous" (Gen. iv. 4—12); and the first martyr has in consequence become distinguished as "righteous Abel" (Matt. xxiii. 35; 1 John iii. 12). Indeed, Abel still speaks to the whole Church by his faith. He teaches us that we can only approach God through the propitiation of Christ, and that in pleading the one propitiation we must bring also the sacrifice of "a broken spirit."

II. THE EXAMPLE OF ENOCH. (Vers. 5, 6.) What a contrast between the end of Abel's earthly life and that of Enoch! And what a pleasant break in the melancholy monotone of Gen. v., "And he died," are the sweet words used regarding Enoch's removal: "He was not, for God took him" (ver. 24)! Here we have: 1. *A statement regarding Enoch's translation.* (Ver. 5.) His faith is represented as the reason on account of which he was transported to heaven without tasting of death. His wonderful removal was the reward of his singularly holy life; and that, in turn, was the fruit of his faith. 2. *An argument in support of this statement.* (1) Such is the representation of the Old Testament (ver. 5). Enoch's translation is there said (Gen. v. 24) to have taken place in consequence of the peculiar favour of God. Scripture bears witness to him "that he had been well-pleasing unto God" before it informs us of his glorification. (2) It is self-evident that none but a believer can obtain the Divine favour (ver. 6). The spring of holiness is always faith. Enoch, like Abel, had met with the unseen Jehovah over a bleeding sacrifice. He had lived under a sense of the Divine presence. He had confided in God, and cultivated congeniality with him. He had been a witness for him to a sensuous and ungodly world. The apostle mentions in this connection two indispensable articles of faith regarding God. First, *his being*. To believe in God is to be convinced of a truth "not seen," and made evident only by revelation. Secondly, *his benevolence*. To believe in God as "a Rewarder" is to cherish "the confidence of things hoped for." But the gospel revelation alone assures us of Jehovah's accessibility, and of the principles of his moral administration. Yet Enoch, albeit he lived in the scanty twilight of the patriarchal economy, firmly grasped these great doctrines; and the faith of them led him on, step by step, until he found himself in the glorious presence of God in heaven.

III. THE EXAMPLE OF NOAH. (Ver. 7.) The name of Noah is associated with a stupendous catastrophe, the faith of which, while it was "not seen as yet," brought deliverance to himself and his family, and constituted him the second father of the human race. 1. *Noah's faith was severely tried.* The Deluge, of which he was forewarned, was an unprecedented event, and could only take place by a miracle. Then, for more than a century after the warning was given, and indeed until the very day when it began to be fulfilled, there were no premonitions of its fulfilment. During all that time, too, Noah had to labour at the gigantic task of constructing the ark, amid the jeers of an ungodly world. 2. *His faith bravely triumphed.* The victory is seen in his "godly fear," and his unquestioning obedience. It appears in his invincible perseverance as the builder of the ark, and as "a preacher of righteousness." It is reflected in the confidence with which he obeyed the Divine summons to enter the ark while the sky was yet cloudless. And Noah's triumphant faith "condemned the world;" for the event showed that the doom of its unbelief was just. 3. *His faith was richly rewarded.* It brought him the highest honour. It was the means of confirming his already eminent piety, and of certifying his possession of "righteousness." It made him an "heir of God."

LESSONS. In Abel, we see faith as the condition of acceptable worship; in Enoch, as the root of godliness; in Noah, as the principle of separation from the life and destiny of the ungodly. Again, Abel's faith condemns the spirit which denies the necessity of an expiatory atonement; Enoch's, the spirit of secularism, positivism, agnosticism; Noah's, the spirit which stumbles at the possibility of miracles.

Vers. 8—19.—Faith of the Hebrew Pilgrim Fathers. What Anglo-Saxon could look without emotion on the granite boulder at New Plymouth—"the corner-stone of a nation"—upon which the Pilgrim Fathers of New England stepped ashore from the *Mayflower*? And, in like manner, what Jew can think but with enthusiasm of those three glorious names—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? The verses before us were well fitted to stir the hearts' blood of the Hebrews to whom this treatise was addressed. And they should stir ours too; for these patriarchs are the Pilgrim Fathers of all the men of faith. We shall consider the passage chiefly in connection with Abraham, the father of the faithful. In his spiritual life there were at least four great crises—four occasions upon which his faith was severely tried, and came forth victorious. The apostle introduces his reference to each of these with the expression which is the refrain of the whole chapter—"By faith" (vers. 8, 9, 11, 17).

I. ABRAHAM'S FAITH WAS SHOWN IN HIS EMIGRATION. (Ver. 8.) It was a hard command which he received, to leave his native country, and to cast himself upon the bare promise of God for another home. He had to break the ties which bound him to the scenes of his youth. He was at first ignorant as to what country he was going. His long journey would expose him to hardships and dangers. Yet Abraham did not hesitate to obey. He gathered his flocks together, and set out with his household caravan. It was impossible that he could have comprehended the large plan of Providence, of which only one little corner was unfolded in his call; but the precept and the promise were sufficient to determine his action. So he put his hand trustfully into the great hand of God, and allowed him to guide his feet. Abraham's emigration was the first link in the golden chain of the triumphs of his faith. It teaches us such lessons as these—that personal religion (1) takes its rise in God; (2) is the fruit of a Divine revelation; and (3) is the product of an earnest faith.

II. ABRAHAM'S FAITH WAS SHOWN IN HIS LIFELONG PILGRIMAGE. (Vers. 9, 10, 13—16.) When he arrived in Canaan, the patriarch found that he was not to receive immediate possession of the land. Indeed, while he lived, it remained still but "the land of promise." He dwelt in tents. He did not build any walled city. The only piece of ground which he ever acquired was a burying-place. But his view of the meaning of the covenant expanded with his spiritual experience. Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Jacob, gradually learned that the promise of an inheritance in the literal Canaan was in their own case an *illusion*. Yet they did not conclude that it had been a *delusion*. They learned to understand the promises spiritually, and were persuaded that God would fulfil his word even to themselves, in a deeper way than at first they had dreamed. So they steadfastly maintained their faith; and, viewing Canaan as a type of heaven, "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Abraham was content to feel always from home in this world. Although he became immensely wealthy, he continued spiritually a pilgrim. His maxim was not that of sense, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush;" rather, as a prince of the men of faith, "he looked for the city which hath the foundations." The fatherland for which he longed was not the place of his birth, else he could easily have recrossed the Euphrates (ver. 15). "The heirs of the promise" sought their home in heaven. And so, "These all died in faith," is the epitaph common to all the monuments in *Patriarchs' Corner* of the abbey church of the Old Testament. And because they so died, God condescended to take one of his great Bible-names from those Hebrew Pilgrim Fathers—"The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

III. ABRAHAM'S FAITH WAS SHOWN DURING HIS PROTRACTED CHILDLESSNESS. (Vers. 11, 12.) This severe trial Sarah shared with him. If the faith of Abraham forms, as it were, the magnificent frontispiece of the volume of Jewish history, Sarah's faith occupies the position of the vignette upon the title-page (Isa. li. 2). The time came when the birth of a child to them was, humanly speaking, doubly impossible; and yet God said that the covenant would not be fulfilled in the line of Ishmael. Had it not been for

their faith, accordingly, Sarah's son Isaac would never have been born; and the promise could not have been realized that Abraham should have a posterity—both natural and spiritual—numerous as the stars in the Eastern sky, or as the sand-grains upon the shore of ocean.

IV. ABRAHAM'S FAITH WAS SHOWN IN THE SACRIFICE OF HIS SON. (Vers. 17—19.) This extraordinary event was the final strain to which his faith was subjected. It was a dreadful ordeal, and one from which even most good men would have recoiled with horror. The patriarch was commanded to offer up the most precious of all sacrifices. He was to perform a deed abhorrent to the most sacred human affection. He was required to put to death the heir of the Divine promise, and thus appear to destroy the hopes which clustered round him. Yet by faith Abraham sustained this last and crowning trial. His submission was entire. His obedience was perfect. The apostle says definitely that he "offered up Isaac;" for the sacrifice was completely accomplished in the patriarch's will before the angel stayed his hand. And what was the faith which comforted his heart and nerved his arm, at this unparalleled crisis of his spiritual life? Abraham accounted that "God is able to raise up, even from the dead." He was sure that Isaac would be restored to life again, rather than that the promise should fail. Isaac's resurrection would not be a greater miracle than his birth had been. And, the apostle adds, the patriarch really did receive Isaac from the dead, figuratively speaking (ver. 19). An achievement so sublime evinced that complete self-consecration and submission to God's will which belongs only to perfect faith, and thus certifies Abraham's right to the lofty title of "father of the faithful."

APPLICATION. 1. Are we ready to obey any call of God, whether relating to our outer life or to our soul-life? 2. Do we feel ourselves to be "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," or could we take an eternity of our present life, provided our material circumstances were comfortable? 3. Have we the faith which can laugh at impossibilities rather than disbelieve the Divine promise? 4. Have we unreservedly consecrated to God our soul, our life, our all? Happy is each heart that can "make melody to the Lord" in the words of the hymn—

"The God of Abraham praise,
At whose supreme command
From earth I rise, and seek the joys
At his right hand.
I all on earth forsake,—
Its wisdom, fame, and power;
And him my only Portion make,
My Shield and Tower."
(Olivera.)

Vers. 20—22.—*Faith of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.* Each of these patriarchs died in the firm confidence of "things hoped for," and pronounced prophetic blessings upon his descendants accordingly. The patriarchal benedictions were the expressions of a faith in the promises of the covenant, which was strong enough to bear the test of a death-bed.

I. ISAAC'S BLESSING. (Ver. 20.) The prophecy here referred to was divinely inspired. It was not the utterance merely of parental love. The Holy Spirit revealed to Isaac the fortunes of his two sons; and, believing the revelation, he felt himself impelled by an irresistible impulse to declare it. The sin of Rebekah and Jacob in intercepting for the latter what his father had intended for Esau did not make the promise of none effect. Had Isaac been announcing only his own pleasure, he would most certainly have recalled the words which Jacob had appropriated so treacherously; but the patriarch felt that he dared not do so. He was persuaded that he had been made only the mouthpiece of the Divine will respecting the person who stood before him at the time. He saw that the blessing of the firstborn had been providentially directed towards his younger son, and he confessed his inability to reverse it (Gen. xxvii. 33). Isaac blessed his sons "by faith" in the revelation regarding them of which he was the recipient.

II. JACOB'S BLESSING. (Ver. 21.) It was faith in a Divine testimony made in turn to Jacob that caused him (Gen. xlviii. 5, 15—20) both to predict that Joseph should have a double portion in Israel through his two sons, and to bestow the larger blessing

upon Ephraim, the younger. The patriarch knew that it would be a greater honour to these two young men to become each the head of a little Israelitish clan, than even to take rank through their mother as Egyptian princes. And behind this benediction of his grandsons there lay also Jacob's firm faith in that provision of the covenant which gave the land of Canaan to his posterity. He had exacted from Joseph a promise upon oath that he should not be buried in Egypt, far from the graves of his kindred; and he devoutly thanked God, "leaning upon the top of his staff," for the assurance that his body should rest in the land of promise (Gen. xlvii. 29—31). All this shows Jacob's faith in the future return of the Hebrews to Canaan as the land of their inheritance. And his faith looked also, we are persuaded, to the "heavenly country" of which the land promised to Abraham was only the type.

III. JOSEPH'S BLESSING. (Ver. 22.) Amid the stern realities of the dying hour, the illustrious Joseph evinced the same bright and strong faith which had distinguished his father and his grandfather. It had never counted for much to him that he was Pharaoh's prime minister. He had always been at heart a Hebrew, not an Egyptian. His hope was in the covenant promises. So, foreseeing the affliction of his people in Egypt, and their eventual exodus, he resolved that his body should not be buried in that land. His embalmed remains must be made useful, during the whole period of their bitter bondage, as a witness to Israel of the faithfulness of the God of Abraham. And the tribes must carry his bones with them when they go to take possession of their inheritance. Joseph's faith is so great that he is content that his confined clay should meanwhile remain unburied. So he died, leaving with his brethren this blessing: "God will surely visit you" (Gen. i. 24, 25). His tender farewell shows us how steadfastly the eye of his faith was gazing upon the unseen.

CONCLUSION. The Christian Hebrews of the first century needed "like precious faith" with these three patriarchs, to enable them to discharge the duties and endure the sufferings to which they were called in connection with their Christian discipleship. And so also do we Gentile believers of these last times. Only faith in "things to come"—confidence in the life and immortality which have been brought to light through the gospel—will enable us to live obediently and to die triumphantly.

Vers. 23—29.—*The faith of Moses.* These verses exhibit specimen deeds of faith done in connection with the redemption of Israel from Egypt. None of the heroes of faith in this illustrious roll is more eminent than Moses, and no other biography is more dramatic. He shines amongst the constellations of "the elders" as a star of the first magnitude. Consider—

I. THE FAITH OF MOSES' PARENTS DURING HIS INFANCY. (Ver. 23.) Had it not been for their piety, the child would have perished. The preservation of his infant life was due to an act of faith in the covenant God of their fathers. On what revelation did this faith rest? It may be that Amram and Jochebed saw in the pre-eminent beauty of the child a forecast of the Divine favour. More probably, however, they had received a revelation from heaven respecting him, and had been taught to regard his beauty as a sign for the confirmation of their faith. So their confidence in the God of Abraham, and in the promise of deliverance from bondage, and in the testimony regarding the part which their newly born son was to act in the emancipation, led them to disregard Pharaoh's cruel edict. Jochebed was quite consciously resting the floating cradle of papyrus in the hollow of God's hand when she left it among the reeds on the brink of the Nile. She believed that he would protect the child, although she herself could do so no longer. And the romantic rescue of Moses, and his adoption by Pharaoh's daughter, were the reward which God gave to his parents' faith.

II. THE FAITH OF MOSES, AS SEEN IN HIS LIFE-CHOICE. (Vers. 24—26.) Being himself the only free Hebrew of his time, he occupied the unique position of having it within his power to make a life-choice. And he did this "when he was grown up;" i.e. after his judgment had ripened, and as the result of sober and manly deliberation. Moses elected to acknowledge Jehovah as his God, and to claim kindred with the Hebrews as God's peculiar people. His choice was purely voluntary, and in making it he was actuated by principle and impelled by conscience. Notice: 1. *His choice involved him in tremendous sacrifices.* (Ver. 24.) Moses' prospects in Egypt were very brilliant. He was a man of great natural genius and of extraordinary attainments

(Acts vii. 22). Wealth, refinement, ease, pleasure, power, were within his reach. He might have become a great statesman—perhaps Pharaoh's grand vizier. Josephus says that he was destined for the throne itself; and in those days Egypt was the most powerful of kingdoms. Yet, without any misgiving, he forsook the court, and renounced for ever these dazzling prospects. 2. *His choice exposed him to sore afflictions.* (Ver. 25.) It involved his identifying himself with a nation of wretched slaves, who were oppressed by a grinding tyranny. It brought him into close contact and companionship with hordes of ignorant bondmen. It called him to undergo persecution as the leader of the movement for their emancipation. Moses made his choice at the risk of his life; for, when he had avowed it in act, by killing the Egyptian slave-driver, "Pharaoh sought to slay" him (Exod. ii. 15). 3. *It was a heavenly-minded choice.* (Vers. 25, 26.) It was not patriotism alone that dictated it, although Moses was passionately patriotic. Neither was it mere sympathy with his distressed countrymen, although he had a tender and feeling heart. His choice was determined by his faith in Christ, in the future of his people, and in the realities of the unseen and eternal world. Moses chose (1) "*reproach on account of Christ*." He was, so to speak, a Christian before Christianity. He knew about the promised Messiah, although he might not know him by that name. He believed on him as the Deliverer that was to come; as the "Prophet" who was to be "raised up;" as the seed of Abraham, in whom all nations were to be blessed. And he resolved, through grace, to adhere to the cause of Christ, however greatly it might be despised. He chose (2) to join "*the people of God*." Moses had learned from his mother-nurse of the glorious destiny of the Israelitish nation; and had become persuaded that to belong to that nation, even in its miserable exile, was a greater honour than to stand upon the topmost step of the Egyptian throne. So, when he took God for his Portion, he allied himself with the people of God, whose were "the adoption" and "the promises." He chose (3) "*the recompense of reward*." Moses' faith looked beyond the grave. His eye searched the eternal future until it rested upon the heavenly Canaan. Realizing that "better and abiding possession," he felt that he could not remain a prince of the house of Pharaoh. To him even those pleasures of the court which were in themselves innocent would be "the pleasures of sin;" and these, such as they were, he could enjoy only for a few short-lived years. So, after comparing the best of the world with the worst of religion, Moses decisively resolved to choose Jehovah as his God and heaven as his final home. And this life-choice, from whatever point of view we regard it, is thus seen to have been determined by his faith.

III. THE FAITH OF MOSES AS SEEN IN HIS LIFE-WORK. (Vers. 27—29.) For he not only took Jehovah for his Portion; he served him courageously, and to the end. 1. *His faith inspired the Exodus.* (Ver. 27.) "He forsook Egypt," the reference being, as we judge, to his final departure at the head of the Hebrew nation. Moses believed the Divine promise regarding Israel's redemption. His confidence in God nerved him for the unparalleled enterprise. He felt that he could not seriously be afraid of Pharaoh, for his faith saw always the approving smile of the invisible Lord. Had it not been, however, for his trust in Jehovah, the great leader could not for forty years have sustained so nobly his onerous offices. It was this humble confidence in the I AM who had sent him, that kept Moses from either developing into a despot or degenerating into a demagogue. 2. *His faith prompted to the celebration of the Passover.* (Ver. 28.) Moses believed the Divine threatening respecting the destruction of the firstborn of the Egyptians, and the promise of exemption for every blood-besprinkled Hebrew dwelling. His trust in God was the root of his fearless courage in observing the Passover feast amidst the bustle and excitement of that last eventful night in Egypt. 3. *His faith, together with that of the Israelites, led to the passage of the Red Sea.* (Ver. 29.) There was much unbelief, doubtless, mixed with the faith of the mass of the host, when they stood before the waters through which they were to march. Still, the fact of their obedience to the command to "go forward" did evince some faith on their part. The confidence of Moses, however, never wavered. And it was his faith and theirs that moved the arm of the Almighty to prepare a pathway for them through the bed of the sea. The Egyptians, pursuing them, sank in the sands and waves; for Pharaoh had received no revelation and no promise, and his pursuit was not an act of faith, but of presumption.

CONCLUSION. The chief lesson of this section centres in the choice of Moses. It requires faith still to enable one to make the right life-choice; for worldly advantage does not always seem to be on the side of godliness. The question is sometimes asked, "Is it possible to make the best of both worlds?" And from the point of view of sense the answer is—*No*. Moses certainly did not make the best of this world, according to a worldly estimate of his life. He did not follow the principle of self-help, in the secular way in which unspiritual men do. Rather, his choice led him "to be evil-entreated," and to endure "reproach." But from faith's point of view the unhesitating answer to the same question is—*Yes*. "Godliness is profitable for all things;" although the benefit of it in "the life which now is" consists almost certainly in the profit of affliction and tribulation, the profit of taking up the cross, and of treading in the footsteps of the Man of sorrows.

Vers. 30—38.—Exploits and endurances of faith. The last two specific examples here cited are connected with the entrance of Israel into Canaan under Joshua. 1. *The fall of Jericho.* (Ver. 30.) That stronghold was not reduced as the result of a long siege. It was not successfully assaulted with engines of war. The only means employed were processions, trumpets, and shouts. But the Israelites did not doubt that the word of Jehovah would be fulfilled; and, as the Divine reward of their faith, which they had shown in a sevenfold or perfect manner in "compassing Jericho about seven days," the wall fell down flat. 2. *The safety of Rahab.* (Ver. 31.) Rahab had been a heathen woman, and at one time a woman of abandoned character; but she is now known to the world only as a heroine of faith. The *object* of her faith was the God of Israel himself, and his purpose to procure Canaan for the chosen people. The *ground* of it was the miraculous passage of the Red Sea, and the overthrow of the Amorites. Its *fruit* was seen in her determination at whatever risk to befriend the two scouts, as being Jehovah's servants. And the *reward* of Rahab's faith lay in her preservation amid the general destruction, and the honour which she received in becoming an ancestress of the Messiah.—In this chapter the author had begun at the beginning of Genesis; and he has been turning over the Old Testament Scriptures almost page by page, and finding everywhere noble specimen-deeds of faith. But the time would fail him were he to continue as he began. Although the galleries of Hebrew history are crowded with portraits of spiritual heroes, our inspired guide tells us that we may not linger any longer over individual pictures. He will permit us only a very hurried walk through the exhibition; for he is anxious to introduce us to the masterpiece of the whole—the portrait of "Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith" (ch. xii. 2). What a splendid sentence, or group of sentences, this in vers. 32—38! How rhetorically resonant, and how spiritually triumphant! These verses may be said themselves to form "one great, magnificent picture, full of figures individually striking, and admirably disposed with regard to one another" (Dr. Lindsay).

I. SUMMARY OF DEEDS DONE THROUGH FAITH. (Vers. 32—34.) The men of faith are all workers or soldiers. 1. *Six famous heroes* are mentioned by name (ver. 32). These are, four eminent judges; David, the illustrious king; and saintly Samuel, the first of "the prophets." 2. There follows a condensed and vivid *description of the achievements* of the heroes of faith (vers. 33, 34). The preacher may verify every one of these references from those great eras of Jewish history which extended in succession from the time of Joshua to the age of the Maccabees.

II. SUMMARY OF SUFFERINGS BORNE THROUGH FAITH. (Vers. 35—38.) For the workers and soldiers of faith are also sufferers. Each expression in this eloquent epitome may be amply vindicated from the same eras of Hebrew history, and especially from the later periods, the time of the prophets, of the Captivity, and of the restoration. It is evident that the apostle has here prominently in view the sufferings of Judas Maccabæus and his brave compatriots in the days of that monster of cruelty, Antiochus Epiphanes. The parenthesis in ver. 38, while it is in itself a sweetly beautiful exclamation, also sums up the character of the men of faith in a weighty monograph. "Their persecutors condemned them as unworthy of living in the world; but, instead of that, the world was not worthy of them. These godly exiles and martyrs were "the salt of the earth." Their lives decked humanity, even in its periods of gross

darkness, with a coronal of spiritual light. The apostle's design in this chapter is to convince his readers that in trusting Christ, and daring and bearing all things for him, they are exercising the very same principle that made "the elders" of the Jewish nation the men they were. The apostle stops at the time of the Maccabees. But it is for us to remember that the exploits and endurances of faith have been as great—in some respects greater (John xiv. 12)—in New Testament times than in the ages before Christ. We are prone to draw oftentimes too sharp a line between what we call "sacred history" and "profane history," and we sometimes forget that the living God is as really present in the one as in the other. Reflect then, in closing, upon the triumphs of faith: (1) *In the first century.* E.g. John the Baptist; the multitudes whom Christ healed; the holy women who ministered to him; the apostles after Pentecost. Think of the faith of (2) *the world's explorers and colonizers.* Columbus, the Pilgrim Fathers of New England, Livingstone, etc. (3) *Our men of science.* Newton, Kepler, Faraday, etc. (4) *The reformers.* Wickliffe, Luther, Knox, Wesley, Chalmers, Howard, William Lloyd Garrison, etc. (5) *The missionaries.* Columba, Xavier, Williams, Martyn, Patteson, Moffat, Alexander Duff, etc. (6) *The martyrs.* Polycarp, Huss, Tyndale, Savonarola, Bunyan, the Covenanters of Scotland, etc. (7) *God's "hidden ones."* E.g. the business man who will rather lose his trade than soil his conscience; the Bible-woman, working amid squalor and vice in the back lanes of our cities; the dying believer, showing amid the pains of dissolution a beautiful resignation to the Divine will. There are multitudes living just now in obscurity, "of whom the world is not worthy," and of whom, until time shall have run its course, the world will never know.

Vers. 39, 40.—*Perfection through the promise.* In discoursing upon this confessedly difficult text, we shall not discuss the various interpretations that have been given to it, but simply unfold what we ourselves humbly judge to be its meaning. Consider—

I. THE PROMISE. (Ver. 39.) That is, the fulfilment of the promise, or the promised blessing. The apostle can refer in this expression only to the great substantive promise of the Old Testament dispensation, that of the coming of the Messiah. It is the promise of "the seed of the woman" (Gen. iii. 15) and the seed of Abraham (Gen. xxii. 18); the promise of the setting up of the kingdom of heaven by the "Child born" (Isa. ix. 6, 7), and of the "pouring out of God's Spirit upon all flesh" (Joel ii. 28).

II. THE DISADVANTAGEOUS POSITION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS IN RELATION TO IT. "These all," whose names appear in this chapter, are honourably mentioned in Scripture for their exploits and endurances as believers. The promise had been constantly made to them, and they "had seen it, and greeted it from afar" (ver. 13). But: 1. *They "received not the promise."* (Ver. 39.) Successive generations of godly men hoped for the advent through the weary centuries, and passed away before the Messiah had been born, or the true sacrifice offered, or the way into the holiest made manifest, or the great gift of the Spirit bestowed. They continued to the end of their lives under the temporal and preparatory economy—the dispensation of law and ceremony and shadow. 2. *They were "not made perfect."* (Ver. 40.) Old Testament believers, while on earth, did not obtain the clear knowledge of gospel doctrine which we possess who have received "the Spirit of truth;" and they did not attain to the high level of spiritual happiness which is within our reach, now that Christ has sent us "the Comforter." And even in heaven, as this passage seems to imply, their knowledge and joy did not become full until the realization of the promise, through the finished work of the Lord Jesus. There is, of course, no warrant in Scripture for the patristic and Romish doctrine of the *limbus patrum*. The souls of Old Testament saints, after they departed this life, did not experience a dreamy sort of existence in some dreary under-world until the time of Christ's ascension. Abel and Abraham, Moses and David, passed at once from earth to glory. This is true; and yet it would appear, from the apostle's language in the verse before us, that these ancient heroes had to hope and wait for their perfection in knowledge and blessedness, until the death and resurrection and exaltation of the Son of God. Although safe in heaven, they continued to long and pray, as they had done on earth, for the coming of "the fulness of the time." Just as the entire humanity of the believer shall not be "made perfect" until the morning of the general resurrection, so even "the spirits of just men" (ch.

xii. 23) under the Jewish economy were not "made perfect" until the accomplishment of Christ's atoning work, at the beginning of the Christian era.

III. THE CORRESPONDING ADVANTAGE ENJOYED BY NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVERS. God has "provided some better thing concerning us" (ver. 40). That is, we have received the fulfilment of the great gospel promise. Christ has come. He has achieved our redemption. He has sent to the Church his Holy Spirit. He has given us a completed Bible. He has founded a dispensation which is evangelical and spiritual, catholic and permanent. He has opened heaven over the world; and we see the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man. Nor is this earthly life of higher privilege the only advantage which we possess. For at death the believer's spirit now goes at once to be with Christ—a blessing which, prior to the advent, was in some mysterious sense denied to Old Testament saints. His soul has not to wait for its beatification. Immediately after death it is "made perfect." In the presence of the glorified Christ, nothing whatever is wanting to complete its blessedness, except only the resurrection of the body.

IV. THE PERFECTION AND UNITY OF THE CHURCH SINCE THE ADVENT. (Ver. 40.) When the promise of an accomplished salvation was fulfilled to the Church on earth, its fulfilment brought long-looked-for perfection to the Church in heaven. The coming of Christ, while it may be said to have cut the world's history in twain, was at the same time the meeting-place of the two great dispensations of religion, and of the universal Church of God. The centuries circle round the cross, and in it the Church of all ages finds its unity. The fulfilment of the promise in the earthly work of Christ raised both the Church militant and the Church triumphant to a much loftier level than either had occupied before. The ancient heroes of faith could not have attained their new position except in connection with our accession of privilege. And thus all the saints who are now gathered in heaven, whether nurtured at first in the Jewish Church or in the Christian, have alike been "made perfect," and form one undivided society. It follows, too, that believers of all nations who are presently on earth are in real union with this united society of glorified spirits. The Church militant and the Church triumphant constitute "one army of the living God."

CONCLUSION. Although "the elders" laboured under great disadvantage, as regards the extent of their privileges, compared with the Christian Hebrews of the first century and with us, their confidence in the promise was vigorous and persistent, valiant and victorious. They cherished this faith while on earth, and they continued to cling to it in heaven until it became changed to sight. How shameful, then, will it be to us, if we allow our faith to decline! For God has already largely fulfilled his promise of salvation. The first advent is now matter of history. Christendom presents to our view an ever-accumulating mass of Christian evidence. Our encouragement to perseverance is much greater than any which Jewish believers enjoyed under the old covenant. How miserably infatuated, therefore, shall we be if we allow our faith and hope in the Lord Jesus and in the second advent to fail, or even to vacillate!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*The nature of faith.* "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for," etc. This is not a definition or description of what is called, in theological phrase, saving faith. It does not set forth faith in Jesus Christ in particular, but faith in its general meaning and its comprehensive exercise. The text teaches us that—

I. FAITH IS THE DEMONSTRATION OF INVISIBLE REALITIES. It is "the evidence of things not seen;" Revised Version, "the proving of things not seen." There are two classes of unseen things: 1. *Things which are absolutely invisible.* Of these we may mention: (1) God, a Being of almighty power, of infinite wisdom, of perfect holiness, etc. "No man hath seen God at any time." "Whom no man hath seen, nor can see." (2) The human soul. That part of his being which thinks and feels, hopes and fears, loves and hates, no man in our present state has seen. (3) Spiritual truth is invisible to our bodily eyes. We perceive it, but we cannot see it. 2. *Things which are relatively invisible.* (1) There are great historical facts which are invisible to us. Some of these are mentioned in this chapter; e.g. the Creation, the Deluge. But those are of the

greatest importance to us which are connected with the life and work, the suffering and death, the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ—the great facts in the accomplishments of human redemption. These were witnessed by many, but to us they are invisible. Our attitude in relation to them is a thing of the utmost moment to us. If we accept them, it must be by faith. (2) There are important future events which are invisible to us at present. The heaven into which our Lord has entered, and where God is enthroned, is at present hidden from our eyes. And Hades, the great world of departed spirits, is impenetrably veiled from men in the flesh. The great and solemn judgment, and the different abodes and states of men after the judgment, are as yet invisible to our senses. Now, faith is the evidence, the “demonstration,” the “actual proof,” of these invisible things which are declared in the sacred Scriptures. “It is an act which itself gives the knowledge and proof of the existence of those things not seen.” “The essential meaning of the word,” says Mr. Matthew Arnold, “is ‘power of holding on to the unseen.’” It is a deep and intense conviction of the existence and reality of things and persons which are not apprehensible by the senses.

II. FAITH IS THE ASSURANCE OF DESIRABLE POSSESSIONS. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for;” Revised Version, “the assurance of things hoped for.” It is a firmly grounded confidence of things hoped for. Two observations are suggested: 1. *Some of these invisible things which are apprehended by faith are regarded as desirable and attainable.* They are “hoped for.” Hope is the “desire of good with a belief that it is obtainable;” it is “well-grounded desire.” We hope to receive in this present life Divine grace and guidance, provision and preservation, spiritual help in our daily work and warfare, and illuminating and sanctifying influences. And in the life that is to come, we hope for heaven and all its blessedness; its entire freedom from sin and suffering; its perfect purity and peace; the holy and delightful fellowship of glorified saints; the perpetual presence of our adorable Saviour and Lord; and the enrapturing manifestation of God (1 John iii. 2, 3). We regard these things as attainable because they are promised to the sincere believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. And we hope for them through him. 2. *Faith gives assurance of these desirable and attainable things.* It appropriates such of them as may be obtained at present, and confidently anticipates those that are reserved for the future. It was well said by Ambrose, “The heir must believe his title to an estate in reversion before he can hope for it; faith believes its title to glory, and then hope waits for it. Did not faith feed the lamp of hope with oil, it would soon die.” And more, it brings future blessings into our present experience, and it gives to us foretastes of heavenly blessedness, which are a pledge and an earnest that our holiest and brightest hopes will meet with full and glorious fruition—

“Where faith is sweetly lost in sight,
And hope in full, supreme delight,
And everlasting love.”

W. J.

Ver. 3.—*The creation of the visible universe.* “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed,” etc. The text suggests: 1. *That God existed before the visible universe.* As the architect must have lived before the edifice which he designed was built, so he who designed and “built all things” existed before any of his creations. “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world,” etc. 2. *That God’s existence is distinct from and independent of the visible universe.* God and nature are not identical. Nature is not God. God is not a poetic name for an infinite and impersonal spirit of the universe. He thinks, wills, and works; and the universe is the expression and embodiment of his thoughts. The painter does not lose his personality in the productions of his imagination and his pencil. And the Divine Artist existed before his works, and exists independently of his works. The text teaches: 3. *That God is the Creator of the visible universe.* “The worlds were framed by the Word of God,” etc. Very early in this Epistle this truth is asserted. “Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands.” Our text brings before our notice—

I. THE ABSOLUTENESS OF THE CREATION. “Things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” This statement implies: 1. *That matter is not eternal.* The universe was not made by God out of pre-existent materials. 2. *That the visible*

universe is neither self-originated nor the product of chance. On this point Archbishop Tillotson forcibly observes, "How often might a man, after he had jumbled a set of letters in a bag, fling them out upon the ground before they would fall into an exact poem? How long might one sprinkle colours upon canvas, with a careless hand, before they would make the exact picture of a man? How long might twenty thousand blind men, who should be sent out from the remote parts of England, wander up and down before they would all meet on Salisbury plain, and fall into rank and file, in the exact order of an army? And yet this is much more easy to be imagined, than how the innumerable blind parts of matter should rendezvous themselves into a world." 8. *The universe was absolutely created by God.* He not only formed and arranged its materials into order and beauty, but he created the materials themselves. As to the alleged impossibility or difficulty of creation in this absolute sense, Cudworth has well said, "It may well be thought as easy for God, or an omnipotent Being, to make a whole world, matter and all, *ἐξ οὐκ ὄντος*, as it is for us to create a thought or to move a finger, or for the sun to send out rays, or a candle light, or, lastly, for an opaque body, to produce an image of itself in a glass of water, or to project a shadow; all these imperfect things being but the energies, rays, images, or shadows, of the Deity. For a substance to be made out of nothing by God, or a Being infinitely perfect, is not for it to be made out of nothing in the impossible sense, because it comes from him who is all."

II. **THE VAST EXTENT OF THE CREATION.** "The worlds were framed by the word of God." Not simply our world, but all worlds. It is stated that in our sky there are one hundred millions of stars visible by the aid of a telescope, each of which is the centre of a cluster of tributary stars, making together "a great multitude which no man can number." All these worlds were created by the Almighty. And the probably far more numerous host of worlds as yet undiscovered by man he created. How amazing is the extent to which the creative energy of God has been exercised!

III. **THE BEAUTIFUL ORDER OF THE CREATION.** "The worlds were framed," or arranged, or adjusted by the word of God. How perfect are the relations of the worlds to each other! Carlyle says, "A star is beautiful. . . . It has repose; no force disturbs its eternal peace. It has freedom; no obstruction lies between it and infinity." May we not say this of all stars? How beautifully and beneficently are all things framed and ordered in our world! The earth upon which we tread, and from which we derive our subsistence, has been fashioned in infinite wisdom and goodness to the natures and necessities of the creatures which dwell upon it. In its structure it is not only useful but beautiful. It ministers to the needs of both our physical and our spiritual natures. It stimulates thought; it awakens admiration, etc.

IV. **THE DIVINE INSTRUMENT OF CREATION.** "The worlds were framed by the word of God." "God said, Let there be light; and there was light." "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made," etc. "He spake, and it was done," etc. This mode of expression is suggestive of the ease with which creation was effected. There was no painful effort in the production of the universe; no struggle to overcome difficulties in framing the countless hosts of worlds. God has but to utter his command, and that command at once becomes an embodied and beautiful reality. The continuous activities and developments of nature illustrate and confirm the fact that the creative acts of God are accomplished with sublime ease. All the forces of nature work without friction, with regularity and order, with highest efficiency and deepest repose. Now, these truths concerning God and his creation are not the discoveries of human reason, but the disclosures of Divine revelation. F. W. Robertson says, "Man may tell us of the development of the world from the theistical or atheistical point of view, but the simplest and most religious way is to look at this world as the expression of the will of God. It is sufficient if we feel that the light reveals to us something of the will of the Eternal; enough if the beauty of nature can speak to us of the mind of God; if the blue heaven above and the green earth below tell of our Father's home; if day and night, light and darkness, are symbols of the word God has spoken out of himself in the creation of the world." And these aspects of the visible universe we apprehend by faith. We credit the Scripture testimony, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Thus "by faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God," etc.—W. J.

Ver. 4.—*The sacrifice of Abel.* "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice," etc. The text brings before our notice three chief points.

I. THE SUPERIORITY OF ABEL'S SACRIFICE. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." This superiority was manifest: 1. *In the sacrifice which was offered.* In itself Abel's sacrifice was "more excellent" than that of Cain. In endeavouring to ascertain in what respect it was more excellent, it seems to us that we are not justified in going beyond the statements of the sacred Scriptures. And we are not aware of any satisfactory reasons for entertaining the opinion that Cain and Abel had a knowledge of the significance of the different kinds of sacrifices corresponding to that which was communicated by the Mosaic legislation. The narrative in Gen. iv. shows in what the superiority of Abel's offering consisted. "Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof." Each brought of his own. Cain, being "a tiller of the ground," offered of the things which the earth had yielded as the result of his culture; Abel, being a shepherd, offered from his flock that which had been reared as the result of his care. This seems appropriate. But Abel selected the best of his flock for his offering, while Cain does not appear to have made any such selection, but to have offered that which was most readily obtained. Gurnall states the case well: "Abel is very choice in the matter of his sacrifice; not any of the flock that comes first to hand, but the firstlings. Neither did he offer the lean of them to God, and save the fat for himself, but gives God the best of the best. But of Cain's offering no such care is recorded to be taken by him." When the heart is right even the best of our possessions will seem too poor to offer unto God. 2. *In the spirit of the offerer.* This is the chief thing. The quality or the quantity of the offering itself is of little importance as compared with the spirit in which it is offered. "By faith Abel offered." This is the grand distinction. Abel had faith in God, while it is clearly implied that Cain had not. Abel seems to have been humble; Cain was manifestly proud and presumptuous. This is clear from his anger at the non-acceptance of his offering, and his dreadful daring in bandying words with Jehovah. How could an offering from such a character be acceptable to God? In his sight it is not the material but the moral and spiritual qualities that determine the worth or worthlessness of an offering. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice." "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar," etc. (Matt. v. 23, 24).

II. THE DIVINE TESTIMONY TO ABEL'S CHARACTER. "By which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts." 1. *The matter of this testimony.* "That he was righteous." He was a true believer in God, a sincere and humble worshipper of him, an upright and honourable man. Our Lord spake of him as "Abel the righteous;" and St. John says that his works were righteous. "Jehovah had respect unto Abel and to his offering." 2. *The manner of this testimony.* "God testifying of his gifts." In what way did God manifest his acceptance of Abel's offering? Many suppose that it was consumed by fire from heaven, while that of Cain remained untouched. But this seems to us very improbable; for the descent of fire to consume a sacrifice was very exceptional, and if it had taken place on this occasion it would almost certainly have been recorded. We are acquainted with only six cases recorded in the Bible in which a sacrifice was consumed by fire of supernatural origin (Gen. xv. 17; Lev. ix. 24; Judg. vi. 21; 1 Kings xviii. 38; 1 Chron. xxi. 26; 2 Chron. vii. 1). And each of these cases was an extraordinary one. That no mention is made in the Scriptures of such fire in connection with Abel's offering points to the conclusion that there was no such fire. Alford says, "We must rather think of some appearance or word of Jehovah by which the preference was shown." Probably Abel was conscious that his offering was accepted by God, and Cain that his was rejected, by an inward witness; the acceptance and rejection were intimated to the offerers by the direct action of the Divine mind upon their minds.

III. THE ABIDING INFLUENCE OF ABEL'S LIFE. "By it he being dead yet speaketh." By reason of his faith his life is a permanent power for good to men. He speaks to us truths of the greatest importance; e.g.: 1. *That God will graciously accept the worship of sinners when it is offered in a right spirit.* 2. *That faith is essential to the true spirit of worship.* "By faith Abel offered unto God," etc. "Without faith it is

impossible to please him," etc. 3. *That when the true spirit of worship exists men will offer his best to God.* Abel offered "of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof." When we feel aright toward God we shall humbly and heartily present unto him the best of our thoughts, affections, services, and possessions.—W. J.

Ver. 5.—*The character and the translation of Enoch.* "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death," etc. That Enoch should immediately succeed Abel in this record of the ancient heroes of faith is not a little significant. How remarkable is "the contrast between the fate of Abel and Enoch! The one was crushed to the earth by the hand of a brutal and ferocious murderer; the other was conveyed to heaven, most likely by the ministry of some benevolent intelligence. The one met death in its most repulsive form, and will probably be the longest tenant in the sepulchre; the other entirely escaped it, and was the first to possess the happiness of perfect and immortal humanity. There is something instructive in these characters being placed side by side on the page of revelation. The contrast seems to furnish an illustration of the mysterious diversities of fact and circumstance, which are perpetually occurring in the moral government of God."¹ Our text brings before us—

I. *THE CHARACTER OF ENOCH'S LIFE UPON EARTH.* "Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." It is a great and blessed thing that it is possible for man to please God. We know that we have grieved him by our many and heinous sins; and it is a fact full of encouragement that we may so live as to yield him positive satisfaction. In his infinite condescension he is so interested in us that our character and conduct are viewed by him either with delight or with sorrow. That man should please God implies: 1. *A revelation of his will.* Enoch had no portion of the sacred Scriptures. His revelation of God was small and dim as compared with ours. But evidently he believed in the existence of the Supreme Being, was convinced "that he is," and he knew something of his holy will. We live in the clear and full light of Divine revelation. "God hath spoken unto us in his Son." We know without any uncertainty what to do and what not to do, if we would please God. 2. *Personal sympathy with him.* The moral separation which sin causes between the soul and God had been removed in the case of Enoch. The consciousness of the Divine presence was not painful to him, but blessed. "Enoch walked with God." The will of God must have appeared to him not tyrannical or harsh, but reasonable and gracious; for otherwise his life could not have been brought into such relations with it as would please God. And still moral sympathy with him is an indispensable condition of pleasing him. While we regard him with suspicion or distrust, while we esteem his commandments as grievous, our lives cannot be viewed by him with complacency. As a first step towards pleasing God we must heartily "receive the reconciliation" which he offers to us in Jesus Christ (Rom. v. 10, 11). 3. *Sincere effort to do his will.* To know and approve the will of God without cordial and continuous effort to conform to it cannot be pleasing to him. Enoch embodied his religious knowledge in his practical life; he translated his convictions into actions. And so must every one who would please God (cf. John xiv. 21—24; Jas. i. 25). It was by faith that Enoch pleased God. He walked by faith, not by sight. The Lord Jesus Christ presents to us the supreme and perfect example of pleasing God. His joy was to do the will of him who sent him. Twice the Father testified of him from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him." Him the Father ever viewed with infinite complacency. He is also the Reconciler of man unto God. Moreover, "he giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength," that they may please God in their lives. Let us trust him, accept him, imitate him.

II. *THE NATURE OF ENOCH'S REMOVAL FROM EARTH.* "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had translated him." Notice two points. 1. *The nature of this translation.* We have no means of satisfying all the inquiries which curiosity may make as to how this man of God was translated; but we may bring together a little of the light which the Scriptures shed upon it. It is certain that he did not pass from earth by the same way as other men; that he entered heaven without passing through "the gates of death."

¹ Binney's 'Practical Power of Faith.'

But his body must have undergone some great change; for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven." This change was probably similar to that which is reserved for those who are alive at the coming of our Lord. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed," etc. (1 Cor. xv. 50—54). St. Paul says, "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." What the properties and characteristics of the spiritual body are we know not as yet. But we think that the body of Enoch was spiritualized by God. Its vital relations with earth were severed; it underwent an essential change or changes. Previously it was mortal and corruptible; then it became immortal and incorruptible. Previously it was of the earth, earthy; then it became of heaven, heavenly. So changed was it that Enoch was no longer fit for earth; his body, as well as his spirit, unable to find its true sphere on earth, rose heavenward, Godward. His body was so refined and purified by God as to be capable of the blessedness and glory of heaven. And thus "he was not; for God took him." "He was not found, because God translated him." 2. *The design of this translation.* Why was Enoch thus removed from earth? (1) His translation was a distinguished honour and reward to Enoch himself. By it he was taken from that dark wickedness and daring blasphemy (Jude 14, 15) which must have been so painful to a soul in sympathy with God, as was Enoch's. But two men of all the departed myriads have been honoured by God with a triumphant entrance into Paradise without passing through the gloomy portals of death. Of these, Enoch was one. His character was extraordinary, and extraordinary was his reward. There is a beautiful propriety in such a reward for such a life. It is remarkable that the only two men who passed from this world without tasting of death were distinguished as prophets fearless in rebuking evil-doers and asserting the Divine claims, and each in an age of dominant wickedness. And it would seem that their translation was a decided testimony from Heaven that he who stands unmoved, though alone, for God, is the man whom the King delights to honour. (2) His translation was fitted to impress beneficially the men of that age. Enoch was a prophet to a race of daring sinners. His serene and holy walk had failed to benefit them; his prophetic exhortations and rebukes had embittered them against him; and now perhaps his sudden and strange removal from them will give new and additional emphasis and energy to the words which he had spoken, and the life which he had lived amongst them. They were living in the material and temporal alone; this translation was suited to impress them with the reality and importance of the spiritual and eternal. They were atheistic, some of them anti-theistic; but this extraordinary removal of the holy prophet of God from sublunary scenes would perhaps force upon them, at least for a time, the conviction of the existence and presence of a Power unacknowledged by them heretofore.

Let us, through Jesus Christ, seek in this life to please God, and then, through Jesus Christ, death will prove our introduction to an everlasting, ever-increasing, and ever-brightening life.—W. J.

Ver. 6.—*The impossibility of pleasing God without faith.* "But without faith it is impossible to please him," etc. The fact that Enoch walked by faith, and that his life was well pleasing to God, suggested to the writer this general axiom on the indispensableness of faith in order to secure the Divine complacency. Two principal observations will bring before us the chief teaching of our text.

I. THE APPROACH OF THE SOUL TO GOD IS ESSENTIAL TO OUR PLEASING HIM. "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God," etc. Having asserted that apart from faith man cannot please God, the writer proceeds to show this by affirming that he who comes to God must believe certain truths concerning him, thus clearly implying that we cannot please God without coming to him. 1. *Coming to God implies distance from him.* The unrenewed soul is far from God by sin. Sin against him generates suspicions concerning him, dread of him, and so banishes the soul far away from him. Like the prodigal son, the sinner wanders away from the gracious Father "into a far country." The expression, "them that seek him," also suggests that the seekers have not the consciousness of his presence and favour; they do not always realize his nearness unto them, or they would not need to seek after him. 2. *Coming to God is the approach of the soul unto him.* As the implied distance from him is not local but moral, so the coming to him is not physical but spiritual.

It is the soul drawing near to him in thought and desire, in affection and devotion. The penitent thus comes to him with confession and prayer for pardon. The poor and needy, with petitions for succour and supply. The thankful, with warm tributes of gratitude and praise. The pious, with lowly loving adoration. 3. *This approach of the soul to God is gratifying unto him.* That his creatures, created in his image and for fellowship with himself, should stand aloof from him in distrust, or suspicion, or indifference, or by reason of absorption in other things, is painful to him. His fatherly heart yearns for the confidence and love of his children. He welcomes the first approach of the penitent sinner to him, even as the father of the returning prodigal saw him "while he was yet afar off, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." He is pleased when his children regard him with assured confidence and warm affection, and come to him in their necessities and satisfactions, their sorrows and joys, etc.

II. THE EXERCISE OF FAITH IN GOD IS ESSENTIAL TO OUR APPROACH TO HIM. "For he that cometh to God must believe that he is," etc. Ebrard says wisely concerning this faith, "Precisely the faith that there is a God, and One who will reward those who seek after him, found place in Enoch, and could find place in him. Far from intending to ascribe to Enoch the *New Testament* faith, the author defines the faith here in its general form as it applied to the time of Enoch." The faith which is essential to the approach of the soul to him is: 1. *Faith in his Being.* "Must believe that he is." And we have the amplest and firmest ground upon which to base this article of our faith. The Bible says "that he is;" the universe witnesses to the same great truth; and human consciousness confirms the testimony. 2. *Faith in his entreatableness.* "That he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him." This implies faith in his accessibility; the belief that we may approach unto him; that our prayers will reach his ear. He hears the sigh of sorrow, the moan of misery, and the whispered aspiration of the pious heart. He is perfectly acquainted with the godly "soul's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed." He not only hears prayer, but he also answers it. The teaching of the sacred Scriptures on this point is both full and explicit (Ps. xxxvii. 4; l. 15; Matt. vii. 7—11; xviii. 19; xxi. 22; John xv. 7; xvi. 23, 24; Jas. i. 5, 6; v. 16—18; 1 John v. 14, 15). The testimony of the godly is no less clear and decisive. "He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him." This means more than that the exercise of prayer to God in itself exalts and enriches, calms and cleanses the praying soul. The reflex benefits of prayer are undoubtedly very great and precious, but their existence depends upon the belief that God hears and answers prayer. Prayer would lose its reality and become a mere pretence, offensive to all honest souls, if we had not faith in God as "a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him." But the seeker must be diligent; he must be earnest. "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." The prayer must be fervent and persevering, or it may fail of its reward. "When prayer mounts upon the wing of fervour to God, then answers come down like lightning from God."

Thus we see that "without faith it is impossible to please God." Our subject shows: 1. *The necessity of cultivating and exercising faith in God.* 2. *The advantages of believing prayer to God.*—W. J.

Ver. 7.—*The faith of Noah.* "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet," etc. Very exalted was the character of Noah as briefly described in Gen. vi. 8, 9. And his purity and piety are the more conspicuous and commendable by reason of the terrible corruption and violence which were universal in his age (Gen. vi. 5—7, 11—13). Our text leads us to look at the faith of Noah in three aspects.

I. IN ITS BASIS. Noah was "warned of God of things not seen as yet." His faith rested upon a Divine communication (Gen. vi. 13—21). 1. *This basis was exclusive.* Noah had nothing else upon which to ground his faith—nothing which could serve as an auxiliary support to it. On the other hand, matters were not lacking which were calculated sorely to test his confidence; e.g.: (1) The entire absence of any precedent of an event corresponding to that which had been announced to him. The world had existed long, but no such devastating flood had ever occurred. (2) The uniformity of the courses and operations of nature. It surely would not have been strange if he had reasoned thus with himself—

“Not but by a miracle
Can this thing be. The fashion of the world
We heretofore have never known to change;
And will God change it now?”

(3) His own soul might have suggested serious doubts. Would God destroy all his human creatures—the creatures whom he had created in his own likeness? True, the race had become terribly depraved, men were great sinners; but could he not save them? Would he destroy the innocent child as well as the hardened rebel? And would he wreck the beautiful and fertile earth which he had made and embellished? Or the question may have arisen—Why should he and his family alone be spared in the universal destruction? He was conscious of imperfections and sins, his family too were sinners; then why should the Almighty bestow his mercy upon them, and upon them only? To meet doubts and questionings of this or any other kind, Noah had simply the word of God which had been made known unto him, and his faith rested upon that word. 2. *This basis was sufficient for Noah.* He founded his faith upon the communication which he had received from God, as upon a rock; and his faith remained firm and steadfast throughout its protracted and severe trials. God had spoken to him, and that was enough for him.

II. IN ITS EXPRESSION. Noah, “moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house.” He manifested his belief in the Divine communication by his obedience to the directions therein conveyed (Gen. vi. 14—16). His faith was expressed in an appropriate and very remarkable course of action. That we may the more fully realize the strength of his conviction, let us notice that the work in which it found expression was: 1. *A work of great magnitude.* The dimensions of the ark are stated in Gen. vi. 15. If we take the cubit to be twenty-one inches, “the ark would be five hundred and twenty-five feet in length, eighty-seven feet six inches in breadth, and fifty-two feet six inches in height. This is very considerably larger than the largest British man-of-war. The *Great Eastern*, however, is both longer and deeper than the ark, being six hundred and eighty feet in length (six hundred and ninety-one on deck), eighty-three in breadth, and fifty-eight in depth.”¹ 2. *A work of long duration.* From Gen. vi. 3, some have concluded that one hundred and twenty years intervened between the commencement of the ark and the coming of the Deluge. But the interpretation of that verse on which this conclusion is based is doubtful. Yet the work of preparing the materials for and constructing the ark must have been a very long one—a work of many years. And through all those years he was nerved and sustained by faith, and faith alone. 3. *A work involving very great expenditure.* The building of such an ark in any age and in any circumstances would have been utterly impossible apart from great expense of time and toil and wealth. But to these demands also the faith of Noah was equal. 4. *A work prosecuted despite of derision.* There were probably men of science and philosophy who pronounced the predicted deluge an impossibility, and pitied the prophet as a deluded fanatic. And there were men of a lower type who would greet him with scoffs and jeers, and make him the butt of their scornful laughter and contemptuous sarcasm. Yet the faith of the man of God failed not. The great work was steadily prosecuted, and in due time was fully accomplished.

III. IN ITS RESULT. “By which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” 1. *The condemnation of the unbelieving world.* “His holy fear condemned their security and vain confidence; his faith condemned their unbelief; his obedience condemned their contempt and rebellion. Good examples will either convert sinners or condemn them.” 2. *The acquisition of a character eminent for righteousness.* “Became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.” “Noah was a just man and upright” before he was commanded to build the ark; but in that work his faith was splendidly exemplified and his righteousness greatly increased. His righteousness was great as his faith. It is important to observe that the faith of Noah which was manifested in such an extraordinary and exemplary manner, and by reason of which and in the measure of which he was regarded as righteous, was not fixed upon the coming Messiah as its special object, but upon the communication which he had received from God concerning the Flood. He fully

¹ Dean Prowne, in Dr. Smith's ‘Biblical Dictionary.’

accepted the Divine testimony and nobly acted upon it, and as a consequence God accepted him as righteous. "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness." And he who believes in God now will accept his Son whom he hath sent. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." 3. *The salvation of himself and his family.* While all other human beings were destroyed by the flood, he and his wife, his three sons and their wives, were saved in the ark which he had built.

Many are the lessons which our subject suggests. We mention a few of them. 1. *That there is justice as well as mercy, severity as well as kindness, in God.* 2. *That it is foolish, and it may be ruinous, to refuse to believe a thing because it seems to us improbable, or is to us incomprehensible.* 3. *The sacred Scriptures announce the coming of events of stupendous importance and solemnity—the destruction of the world, the judgment of mankind, etc.* Let us believe the announcement. 4. *A secure Refuge is provided for man in view of these coming trials, and it is adequate for all, open to all, and free for all—even Jesus Christ.* Let us enter in by faith, and eternal security and blessedness will be ours.—W. J.

Vers. 8—10.—*The faith of Abraham.* "By faith Abraham, when he was called," etc. Abraham was a good and a great man. "He was called the friend of God." Even amongst the heroes of religious faith he is conspicuous as a believer in God. St. Paul speaks of him as "the father of all" the faithful. Let us consider the exhibition of his faith which our text presents. We discover it—

I. *IN HIS OBEDIENCE TO THE DIVINE CALL.* "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed," etc. The summons here mentioned is recorded in Gen. xii. 1—5. This call was (1) of Divine origination. It was not solicited from God by Abraham, but addressed by God to Abraham. The initiative was Divine, not human. Every summons to the true and good is from above. Every aspiration and effort after holiness and usefulness is the result of Divine influence. This call was (2) a Divine communication. How it was addressed to Abraham, whether through his bodily senses or direct to his spiritual consciousness, we know not. But we know the fact that the summons came to him, and was felt by him to be a sacred and Divine command. A mysterious and mighty impulse came upon him, and he felt that it was from God. The call was to depart from his country and kindred to a land whither God would lead him. And it seems that either then or formerly he was called to a truer and higher life. Whether he was ever an idolater we cannot tell; but if such were the case, he was summoned from polytheism to monotheism. Most glorious and animating was the destiny which was set forth for him and his posterity (Gen. xii. 2, 3). But at present we have to do with his call to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldees, and to follow whithersoever the unseen hand might lead him. In his prompt and pious obedience to that call we have an impressive illustration of his faith. 1. *He obeyed, notwithstanding the fact that his obedience involved considerable sacrifices.* Unto a man like Abraham it could not have been a light thing to depart "from his country, and from his kindred, and from his father's house." It must have been a trial to him to go forth from places which were hallowed by precious and sacred memories, to sever many close and tender social associations, and without any prospect of returning to these cherished friends and familiar scenes again. Yet he obeyed the heavenly call. His faith in God was mightier than his strongest human feelings. 2. *He obeyed, notwithstanding his ignorance of his destination and of the way by which it was to be reached.* Abraham must, we think, have had some idea as to the direction and destination of his journey. But he was called, not to any country which is named in the call, but "unto a land that I will show thee." "And he went out, not knowing whither he went." The distance he might have to travel, the difficulties and dangers he might have to encounter, the scene and circumstances in which his journey would end, he knew not. Yet he went out, obedient to the voice which faith alone could hear, and guided by the hand which faith alone could see. The Divine call is addressed at some time or other to every man. The summons from carnal existence to spiritual life, from selfish pursuits to generous sympathies and services, from the local and temporal to the universal and eternal, from sin to holiness,—the call to God by Christ Jesus sounds at some time in the soul of

every man. It is addressed by various voices and at different times; to some it comes again and again; and it is variously treated by those who hear it. Be it ours like Abraham to attentively hear, heartily believe, and promptly obey the heavenly mandate. If we have believingly received the summons, let us not hesitate to go forward, though the way be unknown to us. Complying with the Divine command, the Divine conduct will never fail us.

II. IN ITS CONTINUED EXERCISE, NOTWITHSTANDING THE LONG-DELAYED FULFILMENT OF THE PROMISE. "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country," etc. When Abraham arrived in Canaan Jehovah appeared unto him, and promised to give that land to him and to his seed (Gen. xii. 7; xiii. 15, 17; xv. 18); yet he never possessed that land. Very forcibly is this fact stated by Stephen: "And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: and he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child." Once in the life of Abraham the fact that he had no actual possession in that land was very forcibly and feelingly expressed. In his great and sacred sorrow by reason of the death of his beloved wife, he had to purchase a place in which to bury her mortal remains. "And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying, I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight." And he paid four hundred shekels of silver for the field and the cave of Machpelah for a possession of a burying-place (Gen. xxiii.). The points which we wish to bring out as taught in ver. 9 are these: 1. *Though the land was promised to him, yet he never possessed it.* "He sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country;" or, "as in a land not his own." 2. *Though he dwelt in the land, it was as a stranger.* He became a sojourner there, not a settler or a citizen. He had no home there. He did not attempt to build a fixed dwelling-place, but took up his abode in tents, which could easily and speedily be removed from place to place. 3. *Yet he believed God—lived "by faith" in God and in his promise.* Now, as Robertson says, "the surprising point is that Abraham, deceived, as you might almost say, did not complain of it as a deception; he was even grateful for the non-fulfilment of the promise; he does not even seem to have expected its fulfilment; he did not look for Canaan, but 'for a city which had foundations;' his faith appears to have consisted in disbelieving the letter, almost as much as in believing the spirit of the promise." Abraham's life in Canaan as exhibited in the ninth verse may be viewed (1) as a picture of our life upon earth. There is no abiding-place for man in this world; and the Christian's treasure is in heaven, not upon earth; his inheritance also is not here, but is "reserved in heaven for" him. This part of Abraham's life may be viewed (2) as a pattern for our life upon earth. We should emulate the spirit of the illustrious patriarch. "Seek the things that are above," etc. (Col. iii. 1, 2).

III. IN THE SUBLIME HOPE WHICH IT INSPIRED. "For he looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." We must not attribute to Abraham views of the future state as full and clear as those which are unfolded in the New Testament. Yet it is evident that the writer of this Epistle intended to teach that he and the other patriarchs expected the fulfilment of the promise of Canaan in something higher than any earthly city. Abraham believed God's promise; but by faith he looked for even more than its literal fulfilment. His faith hoped for and anticipated a more glorious inheritance than the earthly Canaan, and a fairer, firmer, and diviner city than was ever designed by human skill or constructed by human strength. He looked forward to: 1. *A state of social blessedness.* "He looked for the city." A city is suggestive of society. In Canaan Abraham was a sojourner amongst strangers; he anticipated being a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem, and at home in congenial society. Heaven is a scene of the most delightful fellowships. 2. *A state of permanent blessedness.* "The city which hath the foundations." The inhabitants of the heavenly world are immortal; and their "inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away." The crowns which the faithful wear in that high realm are "crowns of glory that fade not away." Its holy enjoyments are everlasting. 3. *A state of Divine blessedness.* "Whose Builder," or Architect, "and Maker is God." As an edifice illustrates the mind of the architect and the character of the builder; so in the new Jerusalem will be specially displayed the skill and the strength, the goodness and the glory, of the great

God. "He hath prepared for" his people this city. Its securities and sanctities, its occupations and enjoyments, are all from him. "And he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, their God." This state Abraham was eagerly expecting. The sublime hope of it sustained him in his earthly sojourn. To us a fuller, clearer, brighter revelation of the future is given. If we have obeyed the Divine call and are following the Divine guidance, let us hold fast and cherish the inspiring hope of perfect holiness and perpetual blessedness, in "the city which hath the foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God."—W. J.

Vers. 13, 14.—*The Christian's condition in this world.* "These all died in faith, not having received the promises," etc. By "these all" we understand Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Jacob. They died in faith. Their faith, though at times it was sorely tried, continued unto death. And their death was according to or consistent with their faith. They departed this life still believing in the promises, and anticipating their fulfilment in the life beyond. We take what is said of the patriarchs in these two verses as descriptive of the Christian's condition in this world.

I. THE CHRISTIAN DOES NOT REALIZE HIS GREAT HOPES HERE, BUT ANTICIPATES THEIR REALIZATION HEREAFTER. The patriarchs "all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar." They did not inherit Canaan. The promises of God to them were not fulfilled in this life. The hopes which those promises awakened were not realized when they died. But our text teaches: 1. That they firmly believed in the blessings promised to them. By faith they saw them from afar. 2. They anticipated the possession of these blessings. They "greeted them." "From afar," says Delitzsch, "they saw the promises in the reality of their fulfilment; from afar they greeted them as the wanderer greets his longed-for home, even when he only comes in sight of it at a distance, drawing to himself as it were magnetically and embracing with inward love that which is yet afar off. The exclamation, 'I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord' (Gen. xlix. 18), is such a greeting of salvation from afar." "The image is that of sailors who, catching a glimpse of the shores they wish to reach, salute them from a distance." Cowper expresses the idea. He speaks of

"The savage rock, . . .
That hides the seamew in his hollow clefts
Above the reach of man. His hoary head,
Conspicuous many a league, the mariner,
Bound homeward, and in hope already there,
Greeted with three cheers exulting."

Such was the attitude of the patriarchs to the blessings promised unto them by the Lord. And in this respect Christians to some extent resemble them. The highest and brightest hopes of the Christian are not attained here. This world is the scene of the pursuit rather than the attainment of the divinest satisfactions. Is there any one whose brightest and best hopes have been realized in this world? Is our life as good and glad and great a thing as we pictured it in our early days? Are we as true and pure, as brave and noble, as we hoped and expected to be? Verily, we have not attained; we are not satisfied; we have not received the promised blessings. But these blessings still beckon us onward. We long and hope for the realization of them. Dr. Martineau profoundly and truly says, "So far as we are religious, we are in a state of aspiration and unsatisfied desire. . . . In disappointment ever renewed, in thoughts and affections ever transcending all our possibilities, consist all the noble unrest, the progressive goodness, the immortal capacities of our nature, rendering it the creator of poetry and the moral creature of God." We anticipate the fruition of our hopes hereafter. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."

II. THE CHRISTIAN IS NOT A RESIDENT HERE, BUT A SOJOURNER—A PILGRIM. "Confessed that they were pilgrims on the earth" (cf. Gen. xxiii. 4; xlvii. 9). All men are pilgrims in this world. David, in the height of his power, confessed this (1 Chron. xxix. 15). Whether they will or not, every man is moving ever onward from the seen to the unseen, from the temporal to the eternal. Some are unwilling pilgrims. If they could they would be citizens here, not sojourners. But if they

attempt to settle down, some sharp shock soon reminds them that their condition here is not stationary, but itinerant and changeable. The Christian cheerfully recognizes the fact that he has no continuing city here; he confesses that he is a pilgrim on the earth. Mark some of the features of this pilgrimage. 1. *It is irretaceable.* There is no opportunity of going back to past scenes and experiences. The movement is invariably onward. 2. *It is continuous.* There are no stoppages on this journey. Life never pauses in its motion. 3. *It is rapid.* Compared with the work to be done in it, and with the boundless and solemn future to which it leads, how brief is life!

III. THE CHRISTIAN IS NOT AT HOME HERE, BUT A STRANGER SEEKING HIS HOME ELSEWHERE. "Confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek after a country of their own." They seek a fatherland, a home. There is much in this world which is uncongenial to the true Christian. He has desires which this world cannot satisfy. He does not want to stay here permanently. He does not feel at home here. But he is seeking his home in heaven; he is pressing onward to his Father's house. There many of his best and dearest friends have already entered; there many of his spiritual kinsfolk dwell; there the elder Brother and the heavenly Father are at home; and as he journeys thither he sings—

"There is my house and portion fair,
My treasure and my heart are there,
And my abiding home."

While on the journey let the Christian pilgrim rejoice: 1. *In the excellence of the way on which he travels.* "A highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness," etc. 2. *In the attractiveness of the prospects which beckon him forward.* 3. *In the delightfulness of the companionships of the journey.* "He himself shall be with them, walking in the way. . . . The redeemed shall walk in it." 4. *In the blessedness of the destination to which he travels.* They "shall come to Zion with songs," etc. (Isa. xxxv. 10). The journey ends at home.—W. J.

Vers. 15, 16.—*The Christian's attitude in this world.* "And truly if they had been mindful of that country," etc. These words, telling us how the patriarchs regarded the country which they had left and the country for which they looked, suggest to us that the Christian's attitude in this world is that of—

I. RESOLUTE RENUNCIATION OF THE THINGS WHICH ARE BEHIND. And truly if the patriarchs "had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to return." Though having no possession in Canaan, they did not wish to go back to Ur of the Chaldees. Though strangers in Canaan, they did not desire to return to their old home to seek for friendships there; for had they wished to do so, opportunities were not lacking for the realization of such a wish. There are at least two senses in which the Christian has renounced the things which are behind. 1. *He has no desire to return to a life of worldliness or of sin.* He could do so if he wished, but he is not disposed to do so. He has no relish for those pursuits and pleasures of this world, which are followed without any thought of the life and the world which lie beyond. And a life of sin is abhorrent to him. To go back to the old life would be to pass from light into darkness, from liberty into bondage, from noble unrest to seek for ignoble satisfactions, and the true Christian will not entertain such an idea. 2. *He has no desire to return to the past seasons and experiences of life.* There may be times when he has a brief and unhealthy longing for the lost innocence of childhood, or for the too-fleeting enjoyments of youth, or for the recurrence of past opportunities which were neglected or only partially improved. There are, we conceive, few persons but at times have painfully felt such longings. But the calm, considerate desire of the Christian is not to go back to any of these things. His judgment assures him that if he could return to the past, or recall departed seasons and opportunities, he would probably make no better use of them than he has already done. Hence, like St. Paul, he endeavours to "forget those things which are behind."

II. EAGER DESIRE FOR THE THINGS WHICH ARE BEFORE. "But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." 1. *The object of their desire.* "They

desire a better country, that is, a heavenly." Heaven is better than the best of earthly countries or homes. It is better: (1) In its society. The Christian will not feel himself a stranger there; for he will be with kindred spirits. Good people here are not always agreeable; but in heaven the society is always genial and refreshing. (2) In its services. The service of God is delightful at present, though that which we render is very imperfect in its character, and often interrupted in its exercise, and very contracted in its sphere. But hereafter we shall consecrate our perfected powers to him, and "serve him day and night in his temple," without weariness and with joy unspeakable. (3) In its enjoyments. "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." The heavenly enjoyments are distinguished for their purity, their plenitude, and their perpetuity. (4) In its security. Sickness, sorrow, death, and sin, the prolific parent of suffering, cannot enter heaven. Verily, the heavenly is a better country. 2. *The propriety of their desire.* They who have received the Divine call, as the patriarchs had and the sincere Christian has, should aim at the end of their calling; they should seek to realize it, and endeavour to act up to it. In seeking the better country Christians are doing so; "wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God." It is fitting that the children should long for their Father's house; "wherefore God is not ashamed of them," etc. 3. *The blessedness of their desire.* It will end in full fruition. The longing which is never satisfied is only a protracted pain. The longing for what is worthy, and which is lost in its fulfilment, issues in blessedness. Such is the desire of the Christian. "God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city." If God by his promises had kindled their hopes only to disappoint them, he might be "ashamed to be called their God." If he was their God and Father, yet provided no home for his children, he might be "ashamed to be called their God." But he has provided for the satisfaction of the hopes which he has awakened; and the home for which they long he has established. "He hath prepared for them a city."

Since we are journeying homeward: 1. *Let us not be much concerned for either the pleasures or the possessions of this world.* 2. *Let us not count it a strange thing if we have some discomforts on the way.* 3. *Let us not dread death, for it is the gate of admission into the city which God hath prepared for his people.*—W. J.

Vers. 17—19.—*Faith sorely tried and sublimely triumphant.* "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac," etc. Our subject naturally divides itself into two branches.

I. FAITH SORELY TRIED. The supreme trial of Abraham's faith will appear if we consider the sacrifice which he was summoned to make. He was commanded: 1. *To offer up as a burnt offering his only and much-loved son, Isaac.* "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." "By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac; yea, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only begotten son." Isaac was called his "only son" because Ishmael had been finally sent forth from the paternal home, and because Isaac was the only son which Sarah the wife of Abraham bare unto him. He was now a young man, and inexpressibly dear to the hearts of his parents; and his father is commanded by God to offer him up as a sacrifice. Being a human sacrifice, Abraham's conviction of the sacredness of human life would rise up against the fulfilment of the command. Can such a behest proceed from him who had so solemnly asserted the sacredness of human life (Gen. ix. 5, 6)? Being his own son, his only son, his Isaac, the laughter of his heart, his deep and pure and strong paternal instincts would rebel against the dread summons. Is it possible that the holy and Divine Father can make such a demand upon any human father? 2. *To offer up his son who was in a special sense the gift of God to him.* Isaac was the child of Divine promise, and he was born when his parents were far advanced in years, and when in the ordinary course of nature his birth was impossible (cf. vers. 11, 12; Gen. xvii. 16—19; xviii. 10, 14; xxi. 1—3). For twenty-five years Abraham had waited for the fulfilment of the promise; twenty-five years more had elapsed since the birth of Isaac, during which he had been growing ever more and more precious and beloved; and now God is asking back the gift so long waited for, and which had become so inexpressibly dear. Can such a demand proceed

from that God whose "gifts are not repented of"? Can it be that he should try his servant thus? 3. *To offer up his son upon whose life the fulfilment of the hopes which God had inspired seemed to depend.* Isaac was not only the son of promise, but the other promises made to Abraham were connected with him as to their fulfilment. The promise that he should inherit Canaan, that he should be the father of a countless posterity and the founder of a great nation, that in his posterity all nations should be blessed,—all these were to be fulfilled in Isaac. "To whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called." Only the descendants of Isaac were to be known as Abraham's seed, and only in them were the promises to be fulfilled (cf. Gen. xvii. 19, 21; xxi. 12). These promises the patriarch "had gladly received." "He had as it were with open arms accepted and taken to himself each and all of the promises;" he had drawn from them assured hopes—hopes which he had cherished during many years. But if Isaac be sacrificed as a burnt offering, how shall these hopes be realized?—nay, how shall they not each and all expire, leaving the soul of the patriarch in dark disappointment? It seems that God is asking him to give back the promises which he had made to him, and which had so long sustained and cheered him. But is it possible that "the faithful God, which keepeth covenant with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations," should make a demand like this? Can it be his voice that summons to the terrible sacrifice? 4. *And there is a sore aggravation of this trial.* Abraham is himself to be the sacrificing priest. He is to kill and to present this precious and awful offering. The knife that was to slay the victim must be driven into the heart by the hand of his own father, and the same hand must kindle the fire for the consumption of the sacrifice. When Ishmael seemed near unto death in the wilderness of Beersheba, his mother laid him "under one of the shrubs. And she went, and sat her down over against him at the distance as it were of a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the boy. And she sat over against him, and lifted up her voice, and wept." But for Abraham there is no such relief. He must "see the death of" his beloved son; and more terrible, himself must strike the death-inflicting blow. Can it be God, the good and the holy One, that commands this? And is it possible that any loving father can comply with the terrible requirement?

II. FAITH SUBLIMELY TRIUMPHANT. Abraham made the awful sacrifice. "By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac, . . . his only begotten son." Virtually he as fully offered Isaac as if he had sheathed the knife in his heart and consumed his body on the altar. And he did it by faith. The triumph was the triumph of faith. 1. *Faith in the righteousness and supremacy of the authority of God.* Abraham believed that God had a right to his obedience in this also; that "the Judge of all the earth" would not command what was wrong. The reason of the command to offer up Isaac as a burnt offering was dark and utterly mysterious to the patriarch; moreover, it pierced his inmost soul with sharpest and bitterest sorrow, and convulsed his being with fierce agony; yet God was supreme and righteous, therefore he would obey him. Faith was victorious. 2. *Faith in the unlimited power of God.* "By faith Abraham offered up Isaac, . . . accounting that God is able to raise up, even from the dead." How extraordinary and astonishing was this faith in that early age! 3. *Faith in the unchanging fidelity of God to his word.* Abraham believed that God would fulfil his promises, however unlikely or even impossible that fulfilment might appear to him. How he would do so after Isaac was sacrificed the patriarch knew not. But he felt assured of the fact. And so by faith he obeyed the dread command, and offered up to God his only begotten son. Faith in God triumphed over doubts and fears, the questionings and reasonings of the intellect, and the pathetic pleadings and passionate appeals of the heart. And how God honoured this sublime and conquering faith! Isaac was truly offered to God, yet he was untouched by the sacrificial knife. He was given by his father to God, and then given back by God to his father unhurt, and inestimably more beloved and more sacred. And high is the encomium given to Abraham: "Now I know that thou fearest God," etc. (Gen. xxii. 12). We know what it was that God required of Abraham. It was not the sacrifice of Isaac, but the complete surrender of himself to God. When that was made the Divine purpose in this awful trial was accomplished, and "the last and culminating point in the Divine education of" the patriarch was attained. And still God requires this from us. He demands the unreserved surrender of ourselves to him. "Whatever is dearest to us upon earth is

our Isaac." And when God summons us to give that Isaac up to him, his object in so doing is to lead us to present ourselves wholly and heartily to him as "living sacrifices." "He that loveth father or mother more than me," etc. (Matt. x. 37—39).—W. J.

Ver. 21.—*Faith giving serenity and magnanimity in death.* "By faith Jacob, when he was a-dying," etc. Let us notice—

I. THE IMPORTANT EVENT. "He was a-dying." In any circumstances and in any case death is an important and solemn event. It is so for several reasons. 1. *Think of the mysteriousness of death.* There is the mystery of the dissolution of the soul from the body. There are the mysteries of Hades. Where is Hades? What is it? What is the mode of human existence there? There is no authoritative response to our inquiries. 2. *Think of what death terminates.* It ends our visible association with earthly scenes, circumstances, and societies; it writes "finis" upon all the privileges of this life; it concludes our opportunities for the discharge of the duties of this life. 3. *Think of what it inaugurates.* It introduces us to the retributory and eternal state. Yes, death is important and solemn. Jacob's death is worthy of study; it is interesting, instructive, and sublime.

II. THE INTERESTING ATTITUDE. "Leaning upon the top of his staff." Some things of little worth in themselves are yet very precious by reason of their associations. Such in all probability was this staff. It was rich in associations, fruitful in suggestions. It was, perhaps, the same one that is mentioned in a former portion of his life: "With my staff I passed over this Jordan." Probably he took it with him when he left his home and his parents with a guilty and sorrowful spirit; with him, perhaps in his hand, at Luz when he slept with the stones for his pillow, and dreamed, etc.; with him that other night, when "there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." It supported his feeble frame when he met his long-lost Joseph at Goshen; and now it is with him in the "last scene of all," as he worships leaning upon the old staff. What associations clustered round it! What emotions it would evoke! what gratitude! trust! etc.

III. THE SUBLIME ENGAGEMENT. The venerable patriarch was engaged: 1. *In blessing men.* "Blessed each of the sons of Joseph." The meaning of this may be ascertained by referring to Gen. xlviii. 15—20. The blessing comprised petition, benediction, and prediction of good. A bequest like this is better than proud titles or vast domains. The richest human bequest is the blessing of a holy man. Parents, bestow upon your children this. Children, prize this.

"My boast is not that I deduce my birth
From loins enthroned, and rulers of the earth;
But higher far my proud pretensions rise—
The son of parents passed into the skies."

(Cowper.)

Now turn to the staff for a minute. In blessing the lads Jacob thought and spake of God's goodness to himself. Would not the staff inspire him with confidence in assuring that goodness to others? As it reminded him of that sad departure from home, and of other trials, and of the way in which God had led him and sustained him and prospered him, it would fill him with assurance and hope for these two grandchildren. Observe how self-forgetful and magnanimous the patriarch was in this. He has not a thought or purpose for himself. He does not seek to be ministered unto, but he ministers unto others. Such is his attitude towards men in dying. He passes from this world pronouncing benedictions upon men. 2. *In worshipping God.* "And worshipped." In this also the staff would stimulate the aged saint, as it revived his recollections of the fidelity and forbearance, the mercy and munificence, of the dealings of God with him. Towards God his dying attitude was religious and reverent. He died devoutly adoring him. How different is the death of the impenitent! and of those who, although penitent, have to seek God on the bed of death! "Let me die the death of the righteous," etc. But how may we do so?

IV. THE MEANS BY WHICH JACOB ACCOMPLISHED THIS. "By faith." This is true as regards: 1. *The blessing.* Unbelievers would pronounce his blessing an absurd superstition, empty sentiment, wasted breath. The patriarch believed in the power of inter-

cessory prayer, and so he prayed for the sons of Joseph. He believed that God often conveys his blessing to men through men, that he blesses man by man. So he utters words of blessing on the lads. Do you think they were vain? I am sure they were not. The memory of them would be a mighty influence for good in their lives. And as their father would tell them in after days of their grandfather and his blessing, high and holy purposes would kindle within them. 2. *The worship.* Jacob believed in the Being of God. God was a reality to him, or he would not have worshipped. He believed in the holiness and spiritual beauty of God, that he is worshipful, or he could not have worshipped him. 3. *The dying.* That by faith the aged saint worshipped God and blessed men "*when he was a-dying*" is a point of importance. Life and immortality were not brought to light then as they are now. The revelation as to the departed was very dim. Yet by faith Israel died calmly, victoriously. It was by faith in God rather than in immortality. He could trust all his interests and all his being to God. He was confident that he would do well and wisely and kindly with him and for him; and so he fell asleep in the everlasting arms. Faith in God is the secret of victory both in life and in death. Let us cultivate it.—W. J.

Ver. 22.—*The faith of Joseph; or, assured confidence in the close of life.* "By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention," etc. We have here—

I. PHYSICAL LIFE ENDING IN ASSURED HOPE OF THE FULFILMENT OF THE PROMISES OF GOD TO HIS PEOPLE. The end of Joseph's life upon earth was at hand, and he was well aware that such was the case. Very extraordinary had been his career—remarkably chequered and eventful, now dark and anon dazzling, now full of trial and anon full of triumph, useful beyond any other in that age, and very illustrious; yet it is now nearly ended. It reminds us that the most distinguished and powerful, the most holy and useful life, must come to an end here. At this time Joseph's glances were not cast back regretfully to the greatness and grandeur which he was about to leave, but forward hopefully to a splendid future. He had a firm assurance that a great future awaited his family, and this faith rested upon that God who in his providence had so wonderfully led him and so richly blessed him. "By faith Joseph, when his end was nigh, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel." "And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die; and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." 1. *This assurance forms a fitting conclusion to a life of distinguished piety.* The faith which had sustained him in the changeable and often trying experiences of life is clear and vigorous in its closing scenes. In Joseph's case the testimony of his active and public life, and the testimony of his last hours, beautifully harmonize. 2. *This assurance was suited to the needs of his kinsfolk at this time.* (1) As a caution against entertaining the notion that Egypt was to be their home. The Israelites at this time were peaceful and very prosperous in the land. They were in danger of losing sight of the destiny to which God had called them, and of endeavouring to find a final settlement in the land of their temporary sojourn. The word of Joseph was fitted to guard them against this peril. It is in worldly comfort and prosperity that men are most prone to be unmindful of their heavenly calling. (2) As a comfort to them under the loss of his protection. It would not have been strange if the Israelites had feared for their peace and safety when their kind brother and powerful patron was removed by death. But Joseph's calm assurance would encourage them to believe in God's continued interest in them, in his providential care over them, and in the fulfilment of the promises which he made to their fathers. When friends die, when great and good men are summoned home, let this be our encouragement, that God ever lives to save his people and to carry on his work.

II. PHYSICAL LIFE ENDING WITH A BEAUTIFUL DESIRE FOR CONTINUED IDENTIFICATION WITH THE PEOPLE OF GOD. Joseph was a great man in Egypt. His elevation and honour, the triumph of his genius and the success of his plans, his prosperity and power, had all been won and enjoyed in Egypt. He had contracted a distinguished marriage with an Egyptian princess. Pharaoh "gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On." In Egypt "the priestly caste was the royal caste also." In authority and rank, in state and splendour, in greatness and power, Joseph was inferior only to the king himself. Yet he wished both in life and in death

to be numbered amongst the Israelites. Hence he "gave commandment concerning his bones." "And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." We discover in this an evidence of: 1. *His warm affection for his family.* For some years of his life, for more than seven years of his prosperity and power, we have no evidence of any interest taken by Joseph in his father and brothers; but now he manifests a tender and tenacious attachment to them. This is the more worthy of commendation when we call to mind the grievous injury which his brothers had done him aforetime. Joseph loves his kindred who had treated him so ill more than the Egyptians who had treated him so well. "Love as brethren." 2. *His unwavering fidelity to his God.* Joseph's faith in Jehovah had not been undermined or shaken by his residence in idolatrous Egypt. Through life and in death he was faithful to the God of his fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. "Be thou faithful unto death," etc.

III. PHYSICAL LIFE ENDING WITH A SUGGESTIVE INTIMATION OF THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY. Joseph "gave commandment concerning his bones." He "took an oath of the children of Israel" that they would carry his dead body with them, when God should lead them into the land which he had promised unto their fathers. Why should so wise and good a man be so concerned concerning his body? Such concern in such a man is inexplicable apart from the craving of the human heart for immortality; and not for a vague, shadowy existence after death, but for immortality associated with a distinct and recognizable form. The same craving found expression amongst the Egyptians in their embalming of their dead. Joseph must have had some measure of faith in such an immortality. This craving is met in Christianity. "Our Saviour Jesus Christ hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." "There shall be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust." "The hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth," etc. Both the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body are revealed to us as facts in the Christian Scriptures. Therefore, with our clearer revelation and richer privileges, as the end of our earthly life draws nigh we may realize a fuller and firmer assurance than he did whose faith we have been considering. "For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved," etc. (2 Cor. v. 1).—W. J.

Ver. 23.—*The faith of the parents of Moses.* "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid," etc. The writer now passes from Joseph to Moses; from the time of the peace and prosperity of the Israelites in Egypt to the time of their heavy oppression and bitter persecution. This persecution culminated in the terrible edict that all their male children that should be born should be cast into the Nile. It was at this time that Moses was born. Hence the Jewish proverb, "When the tale of bricks is doubled then comes Moses." Some of our own proverbs set forth the same truth. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." "The darkest hour of the night is that which precedes the dawn." Our text tells how by faith the parents of Moses protected their child from the fate decreed by Pharaoh, and preserved his life in infancy. We notice—

I. FAITH IN THE DIVINE INTEREST IN HUMAN LIFE. "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a goodly child." They seem to have believed that their lovely child was the gift of God, and that he was not unmindful of the gift which he had bestowed. Moses was distinguished for his beauty. "He was a goodly child" (Exod. ii. 2). "He was exceeding fair," or "fair unto God" (Acts vii. 20). Josephus tells that when the daughter of Pharaoh saw the babe, "she was greatly in love with it, on account of its largeness and beauty." He also tells that when he was three years old every one who saw him was "greatly surprised at the beauty of his countenance: nay, it happened frequently that those who met him as he was carried along the road were obliged to turn again upon seeing the child; that they left what they were about, and stood still a great while to look on him; for the beauty of the child was so remarkable and natural to him on many accounts, that it detained the spectators, and made them stay longer to look upon him."¹ Probably his parents believed that so strikingly beautiful a child was destined by God for some great and good end. They may have had a presentiment that God

¹ 'Ant.' II. ix. 5, 6,

designed him for the accomplishment of some important work. His beauty was to them a presage of his illustrious career. It awakened or strengthened their confidence in the Divine interest in the life of the child. A truth of unspeakable preciousness is this. God is interested deeply and graciously in every human life. He cares not only for the young life before which a great career extends, but for the obscurest and feeblest human creature. "The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works." There is not a sparrow which "is forgotten in the sight of God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." "He careth for you."

II. FAITH IN THE DIVINE POWER AS TRANSCENDING THE AUTHORITY AND MIGHT OF HUMAN SOVEREIGNS. The parents of Moses believed that God could protect their child notwithstanding the cruel edict of the mighty Pharaoh. They showed their faith by concealing their cherished treasure in their house for three months. They showed it yet more clearly and impressively when they placed that treasure in its frail little vessel amongst the flags on the brink of the Nile. They committed their beloved child, not to the margin of the river and its flags, but to the ever-observant and almighty providence of God. Their faith was as reasonable as it was strong. God can either preserve from danger or deliver out of the very midst of it. The most determined edicts of the mightiest monarchs are utterly powerless against his counsels. "He shall cut off the spirit of princes; he is terrible to the kings of the earth." "He poureth contempt upon princes." "God is the Judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another." He is able to guard his faithful servants against the wrath and the power of fierce sovereigns. He can preserve his people unhurt in the fiery furnace (Dan. iii. 19—27); or can make even hungry lions to be unto them as gentle companions (Dan. vi. 16—23). Trust in him is, therefore, the highest wisdom; for his gracious interest in humanity is infinite, and his power to defend and save is almighty.

III. FAITH IN GOD INSPIRING HUMAN INGENUITY AND COURAGE. It did so in the parents of Moses. Notice: 1. *Their ingenuity.* For three months they successfully concealed their beloved babe. They managed to hide the infant from Egyptian eyes, and to prevent his cries from reaching Egyptian ears. They skilfully constructed the ark, and judiciously selected a refuge for it. They did these things by faith. Faith stimulates ingenuity; it quickens the inventive faculties. And when, as in the case before us, love is engaged as well as faith, and the object of affection is in danger, then the inventive faculties are stirred to their highest and utmost exercise. Great inventions and discoveries are impossible apart from great faith. 2. *Their courage.* "They were not afraid of the king's commandment." It has been well said that "faith has an eagle's eye and a lion's heart. It has a lion's heart to" confront the difficulties and dangers of the present, and it has an eagle's eye to descry the success and blessing of the future. The servant of Elisha was terrified when he saw the Syrian army surrounding Dothan; but Elisha was perfectly calm, because by faith he beheld the hosts of his heavenly guardians. Faith nerves the soul with invincible courage. The most earnest believers are the greatest heroes. The ancient religious believers "through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness," etc. (vers. 33—38). How splendidly was the faith of the parents of Moses vindicated! God kept the infant in safety during the three months in which it was concealed in the house. His eye was fixed on that little ark of bulrushes on the brink of the Nile, making it more secure than if it had been enclosed by castle walls or guarded by hosts of mailed warriors. His hand, unseen and unsuspected, led Pharaoh's daughter to that part of the river where the frail barque with its priceless treasure floated. And in his providence he ordered all things for the protection and education of the life of that Hebrew child, and for the fulfilment of his great destiny. Therefore, "trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."—W. J.

Vers. 24—26.—*The great choice of Moses.* "By faith Moses, when he was come to years," etc. In the providence of God the adoption of the infant Moses by the daughter of Pharaoh was the means by which he received the education and training necessary for the great work for which God had destined him. To the human mind, taking into consideration the condition of the Israelites at that time, there does not seem to have been any other means by which he could have obtained instruction so complete and

discipline so thorough. "By means of this princely education," says Kitto, "he became a person most accomplished in his temper, demeanour, and intellect; he was also trained in that largeness of view and generosity of spirit which are supposed to result from such relations, and which qualified him to sustain with dignity and authority the offices of ruler of a people and general of armies, which eventually devolved upon him. This education, also—involving, as it must have done, an intimacy with the highest science and philosophy of Egyptian sages—was well calculated to secure for him the attention and respect of the Egyptians when he stood forth to demand justice for an oppressed race." "Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; and he was mighty in his words and works" (Acts vii. 22). The choice of which our text speaks was his calm and deliberate decision to separate himself from the Egyptians among whom he had hitherto lived, and to identify himself with the Israelites to whom he belonged by descent and parentage. He freely chose the oppressed people of God as his people. This involved the great avowal that their God was his God; that he rejected the gods of Egypt, and reverently and heartily accepted Jehovah as his God—the Sovereign of his being and his Supreme Good. But brought up in the Egyptian court, instructed by Egyptian teachers, how would Moses become acquainted with his connection with the Israelites, with their history and their hopes, and with the sublime character of the God whom they acknowledged? In the providence of God it was so ordered that his own godly mother was his nurse, and she would instil these things into his active and receptive mind, and teach him the simple and holy faith of their religion. Moreover, when we call to mind the place which, in the Divine purposes, he was to occupy and the work he was to do, we cannot but conclude that God communicated directly with his mind and spirit, and he received immediate enlightenment and impulse from him. And thus prepared, in due season he makes the great decision actual, and openly chooses the living and true God for his own and only God, and the down-trodden people of God for his people. Several aspects of this choice are mentioned in the text.

I. IT WAS MADE AT A SIGNIFICANT SEASON OF LIFE. "When he was grown up." "When he was full forty years old" (Acts vii. 23). Moses made the great choice neither in the heat and impulsiveness of youth, when the judgment is immature and the decisions hasty, nor in the decadence of age, when the faculties are failing, and the mind no longer perceives with its former clearness or considers with its former comprehensiveness and force. He came to the great decision at a time when his mental faculties may reasonably be held to have been in full maturity and vigour, and when he was able correctly to estimate the significance and importance of that decision. Moreover, the choice was made at a time when it would require an effort to break away from old associations and modes of life. Generally speaking, a person's habits are formed and fixed at forty years old; and he does not easily take to new circumstances and associations and customs. But Moses did so. These considerations point to the conclusion that the choice was made intelligently, deliberately, and with entire decision.

II. IT INVOLVED GREAT SACRIFICES. 1. *Eminent position and brilliant prospects.* "Moses . . . refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." He was the adopted son of the king's daughter; but he sacrificed that princely position. If Jewish traditions are at all reliable, he occupied a position of great eminence and influence amongst the Egyptians. His prospects also were dazzling. Some say that he would probably have succeeded to the throne. All these things he renounced in making his great choice. 2. *The pleasures of the world.* Moses declined "to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." What are these? (1) The gratifications which are prohibited by God: "The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vain-glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (2) The pursuits which are condemned by conscience. "To him who accounteth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean." "He that doubteth is condemned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: and whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. xiv. 14, 23). (3) Anything which diminishes spiritual susceptibility or strength, or retards spiritual progress. There is pleasure in some of the things which are divinely prohibited. There are gratifications connected with sin. It were folly to deny it. But they are only "for a season." They will not bear reflection even in this present life. They will have no existence in the future life. All these pleasures Moses cast aside. 3. *The treasures of the world.* Moses turned away from "the

treasures of Egypt." It seems beyond doubt that he must have lived in affluence in Egypt; and as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he must have had prospects of great wealth for his own portion. How strong the fascination of riches is for many persons! And this fascination is more fully realized when men have reached the age of Moses than in earlier days. At the age when he made his great decision it costs no small effort to relinquish voluntarily the almost certain prospect of great wealth. Yet Moses did so.

III. IT INVOLVED THE PROBABILITY OF GREAT SUFFERINGS. 1. *The endurance of evil treatment.* Moses was well aware that by reason of his choice he would very likely have "to suffer affliction with the people of God." The Israelites were treated by the Egyptians as slaves; they were an oppressed, a cruelly ill-used people. Moses knew this when he determined to cast in his lot with them. "To be evil entreated" was almost certain to be his portion; but it would be "with the people of God." An important fact that. They were a people of a pure faith, sustained by a mighty hand, and inspired by a glorious destiny. 2. *The endurance of bitter reproach.* Moses looked forward to "the reproach of Christ" as a probable result of his choice. "He would be exposed to ridicule for his folly in leaving his brilliant prospects at court to become identified with an oppressed and despised people." "The writer," says De Wette, "calls the reproach which Moses suffered the reproach of Christ, as Paul (2 Cor. i. 5; Col. i. 24) calls the sufferings of Christians the sufferings of Christ, i.e. of Christ dwelling, striving, suffering, in his Church as in his body; to which this reproach is referred according to the idea of the unity of the Old and New Testaments, and of the eternal Christ (the Logos) already living and reigning in the former." Reproaches do not strip a man of his worldly goods or break his bones; but to some they are even harder to bear than these things. They enter terribly into the soul. Thus David cried, "Reproach hath broken my heart."

IV. IT WAS ASSOCIATED WITH A GREAT EXPECTATION. Moses "had respect unto the recompense of reward." He looked forward to the fulfilment of the promises made unto their fathers—that they should possess the land of Canaan, that they should be a great and independent nation, and that in them all nations should be blessed. And beyond earth and time he looked for a great reward and an eternal. He had yearnings for immortality. And his hopes reached beyond the bounds of time and space to a perfection heavenly, everlasting, and Divine. This was not the grand motive for his great choice. He did not consecrate himself to the true God because of the rewards of his service. Higher and purer were the motives which determined his choice. But the prospect of these rewards encouraged him in making the choice. And as to ourselves, we should choose to believe the true, do the right, love the beautiful, and reverence the holy, even if no advantage accrued to us by so doing. But there is an advantage in godliness, there is a peerless prize for the faithful servant; and we may take encouragement in the duties and difficulties, the sufferings and crosses of life, by the contemplation thereof.

V. IT NECESSITATED A GREAT EXERCISE OF FAITH. If he had been guided by his senses, Moses would have viewed these matters in an entirely different light, and have made the directly opposite choice. He was guided by his soul. He listened to the higher voices of his being, and complied with them. He looked at things with the eye of faith. By faith he saw the vanity and transitoriness of the things he was renouncing, the reality and righteousness, the essential and abiding worth of the things he was embracing, and he made the choice—the true, the wise, the blessed choice. Let those who are not yet decidedly religious copy the example of Moses. To be guided simply by sight and sense in making the great election is irrational and ruinous. Let faith and reason be brought into exercise, and then your choice will be hearty and earnest for the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.—W. J.

Ver. 27.—*Seeing the invisible One.* "He endured, as seeing him who is invisible." These words suggest the following observations.

I. THAT GOD IS ESSENTIALLY INVISIBLE TO THE SENSES. He is the invisible One. "God is a Spirit;" and the physical eye cannot behold pure spirit. Organs of sense have no fitness for immediate dealing with the great verities of the spiritual realm. Truth, holiness, love, cannot be perceived by the senses; for they have neither material

form nor visible colour. Neither can the Infinite Spirit be seen by our finite sense. When he is represented as manifesting himself to man (Gen. xii. 7; xvii. 1; xviii. 1), it does not mean that the essence or substance of God was seen by human eye, but that he assumed some visible form in which he communicated with man. When Jacob is said to "have seen God face to face" (Gen. xxxii. 30), and a statement of similar import is made of Moses (Exod. xxxiii. 11), we must understand thereby that he drew near to them in a very remarkable theophany, that he granted to them some full and clear manifestation of the Divine, and at the same time admitted them to intimate spiritual communion with him. To Moses himself the Lord said, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live" (Exod. xxxiii. 20). "No man hath seen God at any time," etc. (John i. 18). He is "the King eternal, immortal, invisible;" "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (1 Tim. i. 17; vi. 16). We infer the unlawfulness of any attempt to represent God to the senses. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image," etc. (Exod. xx. 4, 5); "To whom will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?" (Isa. xl. 18).

II. THAT GOD MAY BE PERCEIVED BY THE SOUL. Moses "endured as seeing him who is invisible." The Infinite Spirit cannot be sensuously apprehended, but he may be spiritually apprehended. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." The pure heart is the organ by which the invisible One may be seen. "There is another vision beside the vision of the body; faith itself is sight; and where faith is complete, there is a consciousness of God's presence throughout our life and service which amounts to a distinct vision of God's personal presence and government." Thus may we blessedly realize his presence in our hearts and lives. Thus did Enoch, as he "walked with God." And David, "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me." And Paul, "The Lord stood with me, and strengthened me."

III. THAT THE VISION OF GOD SUPPLIES THE SOUL WITH ITS STRONGEST AND SUBLIMEST INSPIRATIONS. "He endured, as seeing him who is invisible." This realization of the Divine presence: 1. *Raises the soul above the fear of man.* By faith Moses did "not fear the wrath of the king; for he endured," etc. This enabled the psalmist to utter the triumphant challenge, "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear; what can man do unto me?" (see also Dan. iii. 13—18; Acts iv. 18—20; v. 27—29). 2. *Inspires the soul with patience in the trials of life.* It enables the Christian to say even of severe sufferings, "Our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen," etc. (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18). 3. *Inspires the soul with energy and perseverance for the difficult duties of life.* Sometimes the sympathetic presence of a friend is very encouraging and helpful in arduous and dispiriting labour. But the consciousness of God's presence and approbation always imparts courage to the heart, resolution to the will, and energy to the arm of his faithful servants. 4. *Exalts the tone and spirit of the entire life.* "Seeing him who is invisible," a life of unworthy aims or sinful practices will be impossible. Realizing his presence, both character and conduct must grow in purity and power, in piety and usefulness.—W. J.

Ver. 30.—*Unquestioning faith expressed and vindicated.* "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down," etc. Let us endeavour to exhibit the principal features of this example of the exercise of faith.

I. FAITH IN THE DIVINE WORD OF DIRECTION AND PROMISE. Directions were given by the Lord to Joshua for the taking of Jericho, with the promise that on their fulfilment the walls of that city should fall to the ground (Josh. vi. 2—5). This communication Joshua conveyed to the people; and they believed it, they received it as a message from God. They exercised faith (1) in his righteous authority over them; (2) in his power to fulfil his promises; and (3) in his fidelity to his word. In these respects their faith is exemplary; for his authority is supreme, his power is almighty, and his faithfulness infinite.

II. FAITH IN THE DIVINE WORD WHEN THERE WAS NO NECESSARY RELATION BETWEEN THE DIRECTIONS GIVEN AND THE RESULT PROMISED. Generally speaking, in the Divine arrangements the means ordained are wisely adapted to accomplish the ends for which they are employed. But it is quite the opposite in the case now before us. The course

of action prescribed and the consequence promised cannot possibly be regarded as cause and effect. The marching round the city, the blowing of rams' horns, and the uttering of great shouts, cannot by any stretch of imagination be looked upon even as means for levelling strong city walls to the ground. Such proceedings have no necessary relation with such a result. If related at all, the relation is altogether arbitrary. The things enjoined upon the Israelites were simply conditions with which they were to comply—tests of faith and obedience; and the Lord guaranteed a certain result upon the fulfilment of the conditions. And without raising any objections or proposing any questions they believed his word.

"Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why."

And if we are assured of his will in any matter, we should follow it irrespective of appearances and of probabilities as they present themselves to our minds. When he commands, it is ours to obey. When he promises, it is ours to accept the promise, leaving the method of its fulfilment to him.

III. FAITH MANIFESTED IN PRACTICAL OBEDIENCE. The Israelites proved the reality of their faith in the Divine communication by complying with its requirements. "It came to pass, when Joshua had spoken to the people, that the seven priests," etc. (Josh. vi. 8—20). Genuine faith always leads to a course of conduct in harmony with its own character (cf. Jas. ii. 14—26).

IV. FAITH LEADING TO PERSEVERING OBEDIENCE EVEN WHEN NO APPARENT EFFECT WAS PRODUCED BY THEIR ACTION. The Israelites went round the city as they were directed, "but not a brick of the walls fell; and they went round a second time, and a third, fourth, fifth, and sixth time, and still all the bricks were there, firmly cemented, and the walls stood. The defenders of Jericho would look on those wonderful walkers, and one can imagine them saying, 'It is a new mode of assault you are adopting. We wonder how long you will have to walk before the walls fall; Jericho will stand for a long time if it is to be taken by walking.' Nevertheless, the Israelites held in their hands the promise, and they felt it in their hearts," and they persevered in their obedience notwithstanding the utter absence of any sign of success. They completed the prescribed process, and then their obedience was rewarded with success. And in our case, faith and obedience must be persistent, though our discouragements be great. We are called to be "imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." "Ye have need of patience, that, having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise" (cf. Matt. x. 22; Rom. ii. 7; Rev. ii. 10).

V. FAITH COMPLETELY VINDICATED BY GOD. "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down." When the Israelites had completely carried out the directions which the Lord had given them, "the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city." Thus the result fully justified their confidence and their conduct. And no one ever trusted God in vain. Faith, resting upon God's word or character, honours him and gratifies him; and he will not, he cannot, fail the soul that trusts him. If we honour him with our hearty confidence, he will honour us with his glorious salvation.—W. J.

Ver. 31.—*The faith of a heathen woman.* "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not," etc. What did Rahab believe? What does the Bible teach us concerning her faith? She exercised: 1. *Faith in Jehovah as the true and supreme God.* She believed in him not simply as a superior and powerful local or national deity, but as supreme over all beings universally. This is her confession, "Jehovah your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath" (Josh. ii. 11). 2. *Faith in the fidelity and power of Jehovah to fulfil his purposes in relation to his people.* "She said unto the men, I know that Jehovah hath given you the land" (Josh. ii. 9); and therefore she was confident that they would actually come into possession of it. 3. *Faith in the fidelity of the worshippers of Jehovah.* She showed kindness to the spies, entered into an important agreement with them, and fulfilled her part of the agreement, evidently expecting them to fulfil their part (Josh. ii. 12, 13, 21). Three aspects of the faith of Rahab are suggested by our text.

I. FAITH IN AN UNLIKELY PERSON. 1. *Rahab was an idolatrous Canaanite.* She

had not been blessed with parental instructions and home influences inclining her heart to faith in the true and holy God; but the reverse. She was the daughter of heathen parents, instructed in a loathsome and degrading idolatry, and belonged to a people whose "abominations and iniquities had become full, so that the land spued out its inhabitants, and the Lord could deal with them only in sheer destruction." Yet she believed sincerely and strongly in the living and true God. 2. *Rahab was a known harlot.* Whether she was such at the time she received the spies we know not, probably she was not; but if not then, she had been formerly, and was still known by the disgraceful title of "Rahab the harlot." But, as Bishop Hervey remarks, "it is very possible that to a woman of her country and religion such a calling may have implied a far less deviation from the standard of morality than it does with us; and, moreover, with a purer faith she seems to have entered upon a pure life."¹ We should not have expected true religious faith in such a woman, much less conspicuous faith; but such faith she exemplified. Learn that the outwardly moral and respectable may be further from the kingdom of God than the openly disreputable. "A woman which was in the city, a sinner," was accepted by the blessed Saviour much more than the prosperous, respectable Pharisee, Simon (Luke vii. 36—50). Jesus said unto "the chief priests and the elders of the people, . . . Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you," etc. (Matt. xxi. 23, 31, 32).

II. FAITH CLEARLY EVINCED. Rahab manifested the reality of her faith: 1. *In receiving the spies.* She would not have shown courteous hospitality to any of the Israelites, who were dreaded and detested by her countrymen, but for her faith. "By faith Rahab received the spies with peace." 2. *In concealing and delivering the imperilled spies at her own risk.* (Josh. ii. 2—7, 15, 16, 22.) Grave objection has been raised to the conduct of Rahab in telling a lie in order to conceal and protect the spies. We have no wish to apologize for falsehood; but the objection is not a reasonable one. "Strict truth," says Bishop Hervey, "either in Jew or heathen, was a virtue so utterly unknown before the promulgation of the gospel, that, as far as Rahab is concerned, the discussion" of her conduct in deceiving the King of Jericho's messengers with a false tale is quite superfluous. The objection also overlooks a very precious truth as to the relations and dealings of God with man. "God demands not of the feeble at the beginning the great works of consummate faith; he beholds even in the imperfect act the faith which prompts it, if faith is actually operating in its performance." St. James inquires, "Was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, in that she received the messengers, and sent them out another way?" (Jas. ii. 25). 3. *In entering into a solemn contract with the spies and carrying out the terms of that contract.* The compact she agreed to was a thing of life or death to her; and she kept her part of the compact, and exhibited even to the end steady confidence in the fidelity of the two spies to their engagement. Her actions proved the reality and strength of her faith.

III. FAITH RICHLY REWARDED. 1. *In the preservation of herself and her kindred when her fellow-citizens were destroyed.* (Josh. vi. 22, 23, 25.) "By faith Rahab the harlot perished not with them that were disobedient." Her fellow-citizens had heard the reports of what God had done for Israel, and of the remarkable victories which the Israelites had achieved, but they believed not in the God of Israel. "They believed not that Israel's God was the true God, and that Israel was the peculiar people of God, though they had evidence sufficient of it." Or, as Alford expresses it, "The inhabitants of Jericho were disobedient to the will of God manifested by the signs and wonders which he had wrought for Israel; as is implied by Rahab's speech (Josh. ii. 9—12)." And they perished. But Rahab and her family were saved. 2. *In the honourable distinction to which she attained.* She is exhibited in this Epistle as an example of distinguished faith, and by St. James (ii. 25) as an example of conduct consistent with her faith. And, far higher than these commendations, as the wife of Salmon and the mother of Boaz she became an ancestress of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Our subject is full of encouragement for sinners to turn to God by faith in Jesus Christ. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord," etc. (Isa. lv. 6, 7).—W. J.

Ver. 38.—*The excellent of the earth.* "Of whom the world was not worthy." The

¹ Dr. Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' art. "Rahab."

text teaches that the world could not bear comparison in respect to worth with the persons named and referred to in this chapter; their character was elevated far above that of the world in general. Let us look at our text—

I. AS THE STATEMENT OF AN HISTORICAL FACT. In all ages there have been men "of whom the world was not worthy." Enoch, Noah, Job, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Caleb, Samuel, *et al.*, are examples. In the apostasy and exile of the Jews there were Jeremiah and Daniel, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Amongst the Greeks there was Socrates. Amid the corruptions of the Papal Church there was Savonarola, and after him Martin Luther. And at present there are many who are far superior to the world; who are in the world, yet far above it.

II. AS AN HISTORICAL FACT OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE TO THE WORLD. Without the presence in the world of men "of whom the world is not worthy," it would hasten to its doom. A few scientific men "of whom the world is not worthy" save it from scientific stagnation and death. Some of the statesmen of the past who were much abused by the world, and far superior to it, are now recognized as its great benefactors. And as for the heroes of faith, the godly amongst men, they are the saviours of society—"the salt of the earth," arresting its progress towards utter moral corruption, "the light of the world," saving it from unrelieved moral darkness. The presence of ten righteous men would have averted the doom of the cities of the plain. The world knows not its benefactors and saviours. For those who prophesy smooth things to it, it has crowns of honour and thrones of power; but for those who proclaim the truth, it has crowns of thorns, and for a throne the cruel cross. So it treats the men of whom it is not worthy; so it treated the Divine Man (*cf.* Matt. x. 24, 25; John xv. 18—20; xix. 1—18).

III. THE GREATER THE UNWORTHINESS OF THE WORLD THE MORE URGENT IS ITS NEED OF MEN OF WORTH. The darker the night the greater is our need of the street lamps. When the night is darkest and the storm most furious, the lonely watcher in the lighthouse most diligently trims and tends his lamp. So in the darkest moral night God has often lit and sent forth some of the brightest stars in the firmament of the Church. Israel was in a terrible condition under Ahab and Jezebel, and God raised up the intrepid and holy Elijah. When vice was rampant in the Romish Church God summoned forth the fearless and faithful Martin Luther. At a more recent date, when religion seemed almost extinct in our land, God called and commissioned the Wesleys, and Whitefield, and Fletcher of Madeley, and Selina Countess of Huntingdon. It was because of the unworthiness of the world that Jesus Christ came into it.

IV. THE CHRISTIAN SHOULD SO LIVE THAT THE TEXT WILL BE TRUE OF HIM. Is it not true that the world is perfectly worthy of many "who profess and call themselves Christians"? In business, in amusements, in politics, is their standard higher than that of the world? Let us test this question in the matter of gambling: are our hands clean of it? Is it not spreading amongst professedly Christian people in the forms of card-playing, raffling, and lotteries? But listen to our Lord: "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world;" "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." And St. John: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Let us live above the world; let us live to God. Be this our ideal, "For to me to live is Christ."

V. FOR MEN OF WHOM THIS WORLD IS NOT WORTHY THERE IS A WORLD WHICH IS WELL WORTHY. Into heaven the worthy of all peoples and all ages are gathered. There men are treated according to their own inherent worth. The worthy are worthily received and honoured. How the judgments of earth are reversed in that world! *All true worthiness is "by faith"*—by faith in the unseen, in the soul, in truth, in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the great and gracious God. Let us cultivate this faith. Let us live up to such measure of it as we already possess.—W. J.

Vers. 39, 40.—*Successive stages in the dispensation of God's blessings to man.* "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith," etc. Let us consider—

I. THE GOOD REALIZED BY THE OLD TESTAMENT BELIEVERS. The better thing provided for Christians implies that some good thing was bestowed upon the golly under the former covenant. They had: 1. *Divine promises.* Many were the promises made to the ancient saints; *e.g.* promises of temporal good, of providential guidance

and oversight, of spiritual forgiveness and help, etc. These promises encouraged their hopes, and raised the tone and character of their lives. 2. *Fulfillments of Divine promises.* Many of the blessings promised to the saints of the earlier dispensation were received and enjoyed by them. They "obtained promises" (ver. 33); i.e. they obtained certain promised blessings. A glance at the names mentioned in this chapter will at once show that this was the case. Abraham received the promised son; Jacob was blessed in his worldly circumstances, purified and ennobled in his character, and brought to the goal of his pilgrimage in a good old age, in peace and in honour. Joseph was wonderfully preserved, guided, exalted, etc. 3. *Divine commendations.* They "obtained a good report through faith." They "had witness borne to them through their faith." Each one mentioned or referred to in this chapter was commended for some distinguishing excellence, and every one for faith. Abel "had witness borne to him that he was righteous," etc. (ver. 4). Enoch "had witness borne to him that he had been well-pleasing unto God" (ver. 5). They had within themselves the witness of a good conscience; they enjoyed the smile of the Most High; and in his holy Word God has expressed his approbation of their character and conduct.

II. THE BETTER PORTION REALIZED BY NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVERS. The heroes and heroines of faith who are mentioned or referred to in this chapter "received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us." The promise which they received not, and the better thing provided for us, we take to be the actual fulfilment of the promise of the Messiah, and the blessedness of the gospel age. "Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not." Our portion is a better thing: 1. *Because the realization of any genuine good is better than the anticipation of it.* 2. *Because of the clearer revelation of redemptive truth.* "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son" (ch. i. 1—4). "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." He embodied the will of the Father in his character and words and works. He revealed the heart of the Father toward us his sinful and suffering children. 3. *Because of the greater fulness and power of redemptive influence.* Atonement for sin is now accomplished. The mighty influences of the love of God in the sacrifice of Christ are now brought to bear upon us. Our restraints from sin are more pathetic and powerful than were theirs of the earlier dispensation; our incentives to righteousness and reverence and love are more exalted and constraining than theirs.

III. THE BEST BLESSINGS IN WHICH BOTH THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVERS ARE SHARERS. "That apart from us they should not be made perfect." This perfection is the holiness and blessedness of the saints in light. "The writer implies," says Alford, "as indeed ch. x. 14 seems to testify, that the advent and work of Christ has changed the estate of the Old Testament fathers and saints into greater and perfect bliss; an inference which is forced on us by many other places in Scripture. So that their perfection was dependent on our perfection: their and our perfection was all brought in at the same time when Christ 'by one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' So that the result with regard to them is, that their spirits from the time when Christ descended into Hades and ascended up into heaven, enjoy heavenly blessedness, and are waiting, with all who have followed their glorified High Priest within the veil, for the resurrection of their bodies, the regeneration, the renovation of all things." Then all God's people of all ages and of all lands shall enter into the joy of their one Lord, and participate in the blessedness and glory unspeakable and eternal.—W. J.

Ver. 1.—*Faith in its relation to the future and the unseen.* I. FAITH IN ITS RELATION TO THE FUTURE. 1. *Nothing is more to be desired than a hopeful outlook towards the future.* The future may be regarded doubtfully, fearfully, or even despairingly; on the other hand the question rises if it be not possible to regard the future with a hope which shall become a duty. Doubtless there are many who do look hopefully forward, but they are hopeful simply because of a disposition constitutionally sanguine. They may even make a brightness where there is nothing in the circumstances to warrant

it. They think it is quite as likely chance may bring to them success as failure. But this sort of hope never can become a duty, a feeling which a man ought to have, potent and governing in his breast. We do not want a future dependent on chance, or natural endowments, or favourable circumstances. We want a future which shall become bright to every human being because of his humanity, because of his character, because one of the elements in bringing it about is his own choice. 2. *This bright outlook towards the future is secured by Christian faith.* "Faith is the substance of things hoped for." More correctly, faith is a substance of things hoped for. Bengel alleges that the metaphor is taken from a pillar standing under a heavy weight. We accept the explanation, only adding to it that this heavy weight rests on more pillars than one, and all of them are necessary. The things hoped for will never come into existence for us unless they be related to us by a present, practical faith. Suppose to each of two men a quantity of seed is given. One of them sows his portion, and then to him a harvest is among the things hoped for, his hope being reasonable and based upon an act of faith when he put his seed into the ground. The other, not sowing, if he hopes for a harvest, is clearly under a delusion. The thing he hopes for has no substance; he has done nothing to show real faith. The thing indicated by the word "faith" is something practical; not a man merely saying he believes, but showing his faith by his works. Such a faith becomes a matter of conscience. God gives to the man who wishes for the gift a peculiar insight, a deep conviction in the heart, which is worth more than any argument. The course taken may not satisfy others, may provoke their laughter, their wonder, their pity; but after all the one thing needful is not that our course should be clear to others, but clear to ourselves. If we go wrong in our course through neglect of the Divine voice speaking within us, it is we who suffer the most. We must look to God altogether, and he will give us the right impulse, and concentrate our faculties so that we shall not *drift* through life, but rather speed onward with a definite aim, concerning which, in our own best moments, we shall have a full assurance that we cannot miss it. These heavenly certainties are not to be revealed by flesh and blood. So much turns on faith that it is no wonder it is so much dwelt on in the New Testament. Of what a glorious life, of what beatific imaginations, does unbelief deprive us?

II. FAITH IN ITS RELATION TO THE UNSEEN. "Faith is the *substance* of things hoped for;" it is not called the substance of things unseen. For it is in no sense the substance of things unseen. They exist, whether we believe them to exist or not. But faith may become to our hearts the evidence of these unseen things. Certainly there can be no other evidence. To all our natural faculties there is presented nothing but a bundle of phenomena, and whatever we may think of beyond them comes into our minds simply because we are unable to believe that there is nothing beyond them. There is an outward man, perceptible to the senses, feeling through the senses a like pleasure and pain; but there is also an inward man, a deep, invisible existence, to which God and Christ appeal, as having the proper sphere of its life in the great invisible outside of it. It is by faith that the invisible in us is to profit by the invisible outside of us. Prayer is a recognition of the invisible. We are to endure as seeing him who is invisible. The only source of inspiration for a real and full Christian life is to be found in the invisible. And when the invisible rules, when faith lays hold of its riches, then even the visible becomes a more glorious and profitable thing than it ever can do while sense rules alone.—Y.

Ver. 2.—*The great characteristic of the elders.* I. THE TERM BY WHICH THEY ARE INDICATED. The *elders*. Those spoken of are those who had lived the life of the flesh centuries before, but the term is not used merely to indicate this fact. We know from the subsequent illustrations that the men of long ago are meant; but there is a much more comprehensive meaning in their being spoken of as *πρεσβύτεροι*. *Πρεσβύτερος* is a relative word, its correlative being *νεώτερος* (see 1 Pet. v. 5). The elder and the younger are to be taken together as part of one community, and the younger are to be in subordination to the elder. These elders are to be thought of, not as the dead, but as the still living. Abraham and Isaac and Jacob are among these elders, and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the God, not of the dead, but of the living. Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob, or any other of the glorified believers, could have appeared on the

Mount of Transfiguration as easily as Moses or Elijah, had this been the necessary thing. And these elders, who have received a good report through faith, are not to be made perfect without us.

II. THEIR RELATION TO FAITH. They received a good report. They had witness borne to them. Surely there is great inclusiveness in this word. 1. *Their faith stood to them in the place of evidence from experience or observation.* They were at the beginning of things. They had no histories, traditions, and customs to fall back on. They had to trust the deepest impulses of their own hearts. We are the inheritors of discoveries and benefits which, in the beginnings of them, can have had little ground but faith. 2. *Their faith is the great element which makes them memorable.* The good men among them were better men because they were believers. Indeed, the only goodness that can be anything more than a matter of fashion and convention must come through faith. Take faith out of the lives of Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and you have nothing that should lift these men out of the common multitude. Testimony could be borne as to their faith; but we know that testimony could not be borne to other very desirable qualities in human character. Abraham had no very great regard for truth, and Jacob was utterly disingenuous. But they were *believers*, and in this one fact was sufficient leverage to secure their ultimate salvation, and make them adequate agents for the Divine purposes. 3. *In their faith they become witnesses to us.* We see plain results of their faith up to a certain point. We see Noah justified in building the ark. We see Abraham justified in leaving his own country. We see Joseph justified in giving commandment concerning his bones. We do see that he who sows in bare faith reaps a harvest corresponding to his faith. And so we must take heed lest these elders, now being witnesses to us, may one day become witnesses against us.—Y.

Ver. 8.—*Faith beginning where science ends.* In the first verse of the chapter things not seen are spoken of. Faith is the evidence of these things not seen. There can be no other evidence, for things not seen are eternal; they are beyond the ken of our senses; if we cannot be certified of them by spiritual intuitions, we cannot be certified of them at all (2 Cor. iv. 18). But the things that are seen have also to be dealt with; we want to know the connection of the seen with the unseen; and the origin of the seen we also want to know. Faith has something to say concerning the *οὐ βλεπόμενα*; what has it to say in respect to the *βλεπόμενα*? The answer is that as faith gives our only resource for being sure of the *reality* of *unseen* things, so faith gives our only resource for being sure of the *origin* of *seen* things. The seen things, at least as to the surface of them and certain manifestations of them, lie before us. Especially there are before us those seen things which have life in them. We see them spring into being, have their time of growth, maturity, decay; and then they pass out of any life that we can see. They are not only seen things, but also *φαινόμενα*, things that appear. Yesterday they had not appeared; to-day they appear; to-morrow they will disappear. And yet in disappearing they leave behind them that out of which will come a succession of phenomena like themselves. Thus generation is mysteriously linked to generation, and the world goes on. Suppose we have before us a field of grain. A little time ago that stretch of waving stalks was not; nothing but an extent of broken soil. We look for an antecedent; and the first antecedent we find is the seed that has been sown. We do know that if grain-seed is sown in the earth the result will be a crop of grain, but to say this does not satisfy us. The heart cannot believe that natural observation has the last word to say on the matter. Scientific inquiry goes as far as it can into the seen, and then faith spreads its wings for a flight into the unseen, and declares that if generation so regularly succeeds generation, and age so regularly succeeds age, it must be because God is joining them all together—framing the ages, as in this verse it is sublimely expressed. The verse must be taken as referring, not only to the original creation of the world and all that is therein, but also to the continuance and reproduction of life. The first origin of life is not more mysterious than the continuance of it. And faith says that the word of an unseen God has to do with these mysteries, and the word "God" carries all the rest that has to be said. To say that God speaks the life-giving word is to say that all is spoken in love, in wisdom, and in all-comprehending power.—Y.

Ver. 4.—*The faith of Abel.* I. In his action there was NO RELATION MEASURABLE BY

HUMAN REASON BETWEEN MEANS AND ENDS. Where something is done perceptible to the senses, and the result is also perceptible to the senses, then reason can see that there is a relation between means and ends. But here, while the something done is perceptible to the senses, the result is in no way perceptible to any natural faculty of man. To the pure rationalist, the killing of a beast in sacrifice must ever seem an aimless, resultless act, always a mere superstition, always a waste. It is rational to kill a beast in self-defence, and plausible reasons may be urged why beasts should be killed for food; but there is no reason, save that of a deep, inward, authoritative impression, why a beast should be killed in sacrifice. Abel certainly could give no other reason. And yet, looked at in the light of the subsequent death of Christ, certain great principles of sacrificial action are seen in this first recorded sacrifice, and all the numberless similar ones which followed. There is the acknowledgment of human fault as well as of Divine goodness. There is the acknowledgment of Divine goodness in giving back to God what God first of all had given. But this might have been done by an offering like that of Cain. There has to be something more, and it is reached when a life is taken. The innocent suffers for the guilty. Granted that Abel's state of mind is one inconceivable to us, one which we cannot imagine being produced in us, yet it may have been appropriate enough to that stage in human history. If we had been in Abel's place we should have done right in following Abel's example.

II. THE FAITH THAT IS REQUIRED FOR THE TAKING AWAY OF ANY LIFE. Life is taken away recklessly, thoughtlessly, upon very slight occasion—even human life. And yet, as a child is reported once to have said, it ought to require great faith to put a man to death—a very clear conviction that the thing is right and necessary. Liberty, if wrongly taken, can be restored. Life, however taken, is gone for ever. And there should be consideration, surely, in taking the life of even a brute beast. Hence, whenever there was real obedience in such a sacrifice, there must have been a very deep faith. Faith that what looked like waste was really using a brute life to the very best purpose. The natural life was yielded up, and there came back an accession of spiritual life. The brute was for the time of greater service as a sin offering than in any other way.

III. THE EXTENT OF ABEL'S FAITH. It cost him his life. He died through it. The first example of faith that the writer finds is one where the believer loses his life through his faith. Moreover, he loses his life through faith that had Divine testimony borne to it. God makes it plain that he accepts the true obedience, but he does not preserve the natural life of him whom he thus accepts. The path of faithful obedience may be the path to natural death.

IV. CAIN'S UNBELIEF. By the results of that unbelief Cain still speaks. He did not believe that a sin offering was needed. Then came the results of the unbelief. 1. Non-acceptance of what he did offer. 2. Consequent envy and malice of his brother, who had been witnessed to as righteous. 3. Malice leads to actual murder. 4. Cain, filled with remorse, looses the links that bind him to his fellow-men. Abel's faith has to be looked at, not only in its results to him, but in contrast with the results of Cain's unbelief.—Y.

Ver. 5.—The faith of Enoch. Of Enoch we know next to nothing in one sense. We are ignorant of the details of his life; not even one great striking event is preserved to us. But of the great principle and result of his life we are not ignorant, and it is quite permissible for us to make conjectures by way of illustration. In considering what is here said, we must notice the order of the argument.

I. WHAT HAPPENED TO ENOCH. He was translated so as not to see death. This must have happened in some way manifest to his neighbours, so that they might take knowledge of the event and profit by it. The translation is to be looked on in the light of a reward; but, after all, this may not be its chief significance. It may have been for the sake of others, to whom God's approval of Enoch had to be made manifest. It is no slur upon Enoch to imagine that men as holy as he have been on the earth, yet they have had to die; perhaps live in privation, and die in pain. Therefore we can hardly be wrong in assuming that Enoch's translation was in such a public way as to teach those willing to be taught, and act as a rebuke to the unbelieving. There is something eminently evangelical in such an operation of God. He would draw men to faith in

him by showing what can happen to his believing ones. He shows the way of blessing before he shows the way of cursing. The translation of the holy, righteous man comes before the drowning of an impenitent race.

II. WHAT THERE WAS IN ENOCH'S LIFE TO MAKE THIS TRANSLATION POSSIBLE. "He pleased God." Long before his translation he had had proof of this. God does not defer the signs of his pleasure. He has made us so that the way of obedience is the way of pleasantness, even while we walk in it. But all that God had thus given Enoch by the way was for his own sake. The common unheeding world knew nothing of the joys coming to Enoch through his religion. Now at last, in his translation, something shall be given for a joy to Enoch, and at the same time an instruction to the world. Enoch might have pleased God and yet not been translated; but he could not have been translated unless he had pleased God. Then from this inference the writer proceeds to yet another—that Enoch must have lived a life of faith. To please God certain conditions are requisite, and in the very front of these is faith. We cannot please God unconsciously, as the heavenly bodies do in their movements, or a plant in its growth. We must do such things as the will of the Invisible requires. He will not be pleased with anything we do simply because we do our best according to the light of nature. But this is a matter which may be dealt with in a homily by itself.

III. ENOCH'S EXPECTATIONS. God translated Enoch, but it does not follow that Enoch expected to be translated. All that Enoch could be sure of was that a good present would be followed by a better future. Enoch left this world by a gate that has been very rarely opened—a gate the mode of whose opening we can hardly comprehend. It may never be opened again till that day which is hinted at in 1 Thessalonians, when Christ's people then living will be caught up to meet their Lord in the air. If Enoch had expected translation without the pains of death, he would not have been showing the spirit of true faith. True faith will go on humbly serving God on earth, and feeling that entrance to heaven will come in God's good time.—Y.

Ver. 6.—*Faith needed to please God.* I. IT IS, THEN, POSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD. Some there are who care nothing whether he be pleased or not. God's will, God's delight in the obedience of men, never enters into their thoughts. They live to please themselves. They can even understand that some object may be served by trying to please other men. And yet those who live for self-pleasure are sure to be disappointed. God has meant our pleasure to come through first of all pleasing him. The great law of man's being is that he should serve the purposes of God, and he can only serve those purposes by finding out what they are, and taking God's means to carry them into effect. If, then, it is God's will that we should please him, he will surely show us what to do and how to do it. There ought to be in our hearts a desire to please God. We are not without the wish to stand well with our fellow-men, to have their good word. How much more, then, we should desire to become acceptable to him who is perfect goodness! If Enoch pleased God, we may do it. And the first thing to be considered is, not whether it be difficult or easy to do it, but whether it be *possible*.

II. How GOD IS TO BE PLEASED. Remember always that, in the writings of apostles and evangelists, when God is spoken of Jehovah is meant. Jehovah as over against the gods of heathendom. Their priests taught that it was possible to please them, and showed how the thing was to be done, by offerings of all sorts, and by adding constantly to the wealth of their shrines. The offerings in themselves were reckoned good; and well they might be, for they made many priests rich. Jehovah also received offerings, but to him the offerings had no value except as expressive of intelligent obedience. The offerings were for the sake of men rather than of God himself. He must be pleased by something different from mere gifts of what he has himself created. And here the writer gives us one of the essentials towards pleasing God. Apart from faith we cannot please him. There are many elements in the character that is pleasing to God, and one element is made prominent at one time, another at another. We know that Enoch must surely have been a loving man, for without love it is impossible to please God. Here the important thing was to insist on his being a believer. Idols could be approached without faith, for they were really not approached at all; no heart of man ever came into living contact with them. But of God there was no image; the worshipper had to believe that there was a real existence all unseen. Suppose for a

moment that we had set before us for search and discovery an object perceptible by the senses. Before beginning the search, should we not be wise in assuring ourselves on the following points? 1. The real existence of the object. 2. The probability of finding it. 3. A corresponding reward for the possible toil of the search. There has been faith on these points which has had no rational basis, and of course has ended in disappointment; e.g. the enthusiastic searching for the philosopher's stone. But here is an object, the object supreme of all—God, the Fountain of being and blessedness; and this object cannot be known by the senses. There are many so-called arguments for the existence of a God, but men who think that they therefore really believe in the existence of a God are self-deceived. Believing in the existence of a Being to whom this name of God is given must be an act of pure faith. Men must say, "I cannot believe otherwise; I cannot believe the contrary." Then to this must be added the practical impulse to come in contact with him. Note here exactly what is demanded, as the ordinary version fails to give us quite the meaning. He that comes to God must believe in God's existence, and that when men seek him out and come to know him in actual experience and service, he gives them most real, substantial rewards. For the seeking out diligence is of course required, but diligence is not the quality primarily referred to. "Seek out" is only a more suggestive way of saying "find."—Y.

Ver. 7.—*The faith of Noah.* Going from Enoch to Noah, we pass from a mere hint as to character into the greatest fulness of detail. Enoch's faith we have to take upon trust, for no act of his life is recorded from which we could infer his faith. Noah's faith, on the other hand, we can see for ourselves. It is set before us in a great and notable action, and not to see it would argue great spiritual blindness on our part. Note—

I. THE TRUE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DELUGE. There is much about the Deluge that we cannot understand, never shall understand. Its mode, its details, its extent, we shall have to leave unsettled questions. Difficulties inherent in the record we must confess. But at the same time, our ignorance and perplexity will be a small matter if only we take care not to lose the spiritual significance of the record. We have in the Deluge a great illustration of human faith on the one side, human unbelief on the other. Noah had a revelation, an intimation of impending destruction, which he believed to be from God and to be the truth. Straightway he began to show his faith by his works, thus becoming by his very action a prophet to his neighbours and a test of their disposition. Noah, the believer, is the great central figure in connection with the Flood, and the narrative of it is given, not for the sake of recording a stupendous physical change, but for the sake of illustrating how the character of one man may influence the destiny of a whole race.

II. NOAH HAD NO GROUND FOR ACTION EXCEPT PURE FAITH. Everything in the way of human experience and ordinary probability was against him. He was not guarding against any of those things which men take trouble to guard against. Possibly the certainty of a greater evil led him, comparatively speaking, to neglect smaller ones. It would seem to the world that he might have employed his time more profitably, and also his substance. He could not make his work appear a prudent or a rational one; as he went on with the work and felt his loneliness, he would often be compelled to ask whether he was deluding himself, or was really in the path of duty.

III. THE CORRESPONDENCE OF NOAH'S ACTION WITH HIS PROFESSED FAITH. It does not appear that he went about proclaiming destruction. The revelation was made to him to secure his own safety. His real belief in the Deluge was shown in the most convincing way by his building of the ark. Many beliefs are only in word; they do not at all influence life; nay, more, the stress of necessity may bring action that contradicts them. We have to watch what a man does if we would know what he really believes.

IV. NOAH'S IMPLICIT CONDEMNATION OF OTHERS. In building the ark, he condemned the world. The believer cannot help condemning the unbeliever. He does not wish to condemn, but his very action is a censure; and the more full of spirituality the action, the more does it look like a censure of others. And in the case of Noah the condemnation was unusually manifest. For if he was right, then all round him, on every side, ark-building ought to have begun. The condemnation indeed was mutual, and only time could show which condemnation was grounded in right and authority.

V. NOAH'S RESPONSIBILITY. He built an ark for the saving of his house. To neglect the Divine demand for faith will not only ruin us, but may bring suffering to others. Noah had his family to think of. Blessing and security came to his children through his obedience. The highest things can, of course, only come by individual faith and submission, but something will come to others if only we believe. The believer, while he serves himself, cannot but be of service to others.—Y.

Ver. 8.—*The faith of Abraham going forth into the unknown.* We have to notice what Abraham's faith rested on.

I. ON A DIVINE CALL. It was not an impulse of his own. Not in ambition, not in discontent, not in self-will, did he go forth. Nor was it a suggestion from some other human being. The voice came from above, speaking to what was inmost in him. Jehovah had chosen him for a purpose of his own, and therefore made the authority of the summons indisputably clear. It is the fact of this Divine call at the beginning which makes the observation of Abraham's subsequent course so interesting. We desire to see what God will make out of a man to whom he gives a special summons. It is a great deal when any of us can be quite sure, amid the difficulties and perplexities of life, that we are where God has put us.

II. ON A DIVINE PROMISE. The promises of God give a better resting-place for faith than any projects of our own. God had said definitely to Abraham that there was a land of inheritance for him. Abraham, so far from going out on the great journey of life with nothing better than a peradventure, really had the best of prospects. All he had to do was to show the obedience of faith. God always presents us with a hope when he calls us to a duty. He sets before us great ends corresponding to our nature and to his interest in us.

III. ON DIVINE GUIDANCE. This was the element in the Divine call which would try Abraham most, that he knew not where he was going. This would expose him to the wonder and the ridicule of his neighbours. Human prudence seems such an excellent principle of action, seems to keep men out of so many troubles, seems to achieve such satisfactory results, that men can hardly think of a higher and a better one. But then human prudence has its value only in a certain path. We cannot begin by choosing our path according to God's directions and then going on in it according to our own judgment. Everything must be begun, continued, and ended in God.—Y.

Vers. 9, 10.—*The tent and the city.* I. OBSERVE THE CONTRAST UNDERLYING THESE VERSES. The tent is in one place in the morning, and may be miles away at night. The city always remains in the same place. Thus there is forcibly indicated an altogether different kind of occupation and interest for the dweller in tents from that for the dweller in cities. As the one class of men increases the other must decrease. The fathers dwell in tents; the children in cities. He who dwells in a tent can have no particular interest in the land where he happens to be at the time. If it supplies his wants for the passing day, that is all he needs to care for. But he who has a house built in that land must feel the deepest interest in its fame, prosperity, and development.

II. THE PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF A PROMISE. He who called Abraham gave him a promise, and guided him, brought him at last into the land of promise. He dwelt in the land of promise, in however imperfect and fugitive a way. Thus we see how God gives us all that can be given under present conditions. The time had not yet come to possess the land—the seed of Abraham had to be immensely increased and vigorously disciplined before that was possible—but, nevertheless, Abraham could dwell in the land. Satisfaction and joy would begin the moment obedience began. And have not we also entered in part on our inheritance? Do not the blessings of the heavenly state stream down upon us even now? Abraham enjoyed Canaan; he himself and his dependants got food, and there was abundant herbage for his cattle. He was happier in Canaan, even as a wanderer, than he could have been anywhere else in this world, for he was there by the will of God.

III. THE FIRMER GRASP OF A PROMISE. Abraham probably had always led a nomadic life. Even in the land of his nativity and earlier days he would be more or less of a wanderer. The wandering spirit would be in him by nature, habit, tradition. Therefore as far as he personally was concerned, Canaan gave him all that earth could

provide for the wishes of the heart. But he rises above the individual and the present. As he advances in obedience, the aims of God, the possibilities of his own life, the needs of all his posterity, rise more distinctly before his mind. For himself and his children, and all the families of the earth that are to be blessed in him, he looks for something better than a land to live in for a few years and then be buried in. There is a correspondence which cannot fail to be noted between what the writer of the Epistle says here concerning the tent and the city of foundations, and what Paul says (2 Cor. v. 1) concerning the tent and the eternal, heavenly building of God.

IV. PATIENCE HAVING ITS PERFECT WORK. He discerned that the city which was to have foundations worth calling foundations must come, not from the wisdom and power of men, but from the planning and fabricating of God. And foundation-work of this kind went on very slowly, according to human computation. The great thing to be remembered is that the foundation of this city of God lies outside the limits of the seen and the temporal. The city of God is to be looked at in a similar way to the rest provided for God's people already spoken of (ch. iv.). There remaineth a city which hath foundations, a house of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Waiting is our great duty, rejoicing in the present indwelling of God's Spirit as the earnest, and knowing that the fulness will come in its own order.—Y.

Vers. 13—16.—*The two fatherlands.* I. THAT FROM WHICH THEY HAD COME. The writer of this Epistle has been a student of the recorded experiences and habitual feelings of his devout ancestors. Many of the descendants of Abraham had no devoutness in them. They cared nothing where they lived so long as they could get gain and their fill of the pleasures of life. Such were really not reckoned in the exceeding multitude at all. They that are of faith are the children of faithful Abraham. And few as they were probably out of the bulk of Abraham's descendants according to the flesh, nevertheless they may have been a great number, more than we have any idea of. The Lord's people, though far from being as many as they ought to be, are yet more numerous than we think. Remember Elijah's ignorance of the seven thousand who had not bowed to Baal. Such people must ever express their longings for something far beyond what any earthly locality can supply. And as the writer says, these longings are ever expressed in the spirit of faith. Looking away from earth, and from self, and from the present, they see what an abundance of promises is theirs. They dwell in Canaan as strangers and sojourners dwell in a land. They pass through it as seeking something which they do not expect to find in it. It is part of the necessary way; it does not contain the journey's end. All travellers have a choice; they can press forward into the unknown or they can go back. Israelites might have sought the home of Abraham, on the possibility that there might be found a peace and satisfaction not to be found in Canaan. There is something in the power of fatherland. Englishmen will go to live abroad for many years, but they like to come back for the last chapter of life. We all know the popular belief that people out of health may benefit by going to their native air.

II. THE HEAVENLY FATHERLAND. Our Father in heaven makes in heaven the satisfying provision for his children. All the meaning of the passage here is only to be apprehended by bearing in mind the fatherhood of God. Spiritual relations are more than natural ones; heavenly relations than earthly ones. Abraham left the land of his fathers because only by doing so could the seeds of a new, a better condition of things be sown. And then little by little it must have become clear that outward change was to make clear the need of something more—individual, inward change. Spiritual aspirations, strongly expressed because they are deeply felt, draw forth God's response of special interest in those who cherish such aspirations. God holds forth the heavenly land, the land of his full manifestation and his unobscured glory, before all believers. Prophecy is full of that which encourages faith in this respect. As to the nature of the heavenly state, the Lord's true people may have been in much ignorance; but as to the satisfying reality of it they were fully assured. God never asks for faith without giving something corresponding to cheer his people, to lift them above the attractions, the delusions, and the temptations of the present.—Y.

Vers. 17—19.—*Abraham's faith in offering Isaac.* This is to be considered here as

an illustration of faith. All our modern difficulties as to the right and wrong of Abraham's conduct never occurred to the writer of this Epistle. A human sacrifice was not abhorrent to Abraham's views of religious necessity. Here we have simply to look at the faith a father showed when called to give up his only son. See—

I. FAITH TRIUMPHING OVER NATURAL INCLINATIONS. Not over natural affections; for Abraham, having loved his son, loved him to the end. The very depth and intensity of his natural affection make his faith appear the stronger. We must not for a moment admit that natural affection could be even deadened in his heart to allow him to do such a thing. But assuredly his natural inclinations must have had a struggle with his faith before they surrendered. It is an almost universal tendency among parents to wish that *their* children should have the rewards and comforts of life. Wherever failure and suffering may come, they are not to come to them. The mother of James and John showed this feeling very strongly. This is the way in which natural affection gets spoiled and made a hideous thing through selfishness. This is the way in which natural affection often defeats itself, and instead of doing the best thing for children does the worst. Here surely is an example for parents in dealing with their children. Let them try to find out what God would have them do, what is really best upon a large view of the future, and not what seems best, not what is easiest and most comfortable. God called both Abraham and his son to self-sacrifice, and his view was far better than any inclination or judgment of their own.

II. FAITH TRIUMPHING OVER PLAUSIBLE OBJECTIONS. Was there ever a finer chance for the tempter to make the worse appear the better reason, to strengthen natural inclination by plausible representations as to what was the Divine will? It seems most reasonable to say, "Isaac is the child of promise: the future for generations depends on his life; whatever else may happen to him, it is clear he is not to die now." And only too often in life plausible reasons for what turns out in the end an utterly wrong course are found with very little ingenuity. It is not enough that a way should seem right to love and prudence. Opportunities may come seeming on the surface of them to have signs of Providence, and yet all the time the real pointings of Providence may be neglected. The mind gets led away with unconscious sophistries. Now, it is in view of just such circumstances that God comes in with his clear authority to take the place of our plausible views and arguments. There are times when distinct, impressive intimations are not needed, when ordinary common sense and right feeling are quite enough. But also there are times when one clear, significant word from above will settle everything to the humble and docile mind.

III. FAITH ASSURED OF THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD. Notice that God did not come in with this trial of faith at the beginning of his dealings with Abraham. He showed him first of all much of his power and his guiding hand. The child whom he asked in sacrifice had first of all been given in miracle. Divine demands are always proportioned to strength and to previous experiences. And so, however hard the trial might be to the feelings of the father, yet it had its eminently reasonable side when it appealed to the experience of the believer. God was putting honour upon Abraham in judging him fit for such a demand as this.—Y.

Ver. 21.—*A blessing for each.* The emphatic word here is "both," or, as the Revised Version much better puts it, "each." We see this emphasis at once on reading the narrative in Gen. xlviii. Jacob had a blessing for each of his own sons, but when he comes to Joseph he individually is passed over as it were, because Manasseh and Ephraim cannot be comprehended in a common blessing. All these blessings of Joseph are, of course, to be taken as predictions, having a particular emphasis, solemnity, and memorable character as the words of a dying man concerning sons and grandsons. The distinctions then made could not be afterwards ignored or destroyed. There was a correspondence between the blessings and the after history of the tribes. Jacob did not thus speak because of some peculiar interest of his own in Ephraim and Manasseh. The father and the grandfather assumed the prophet while he spake the blessings. He laid his right hand on the head of the younger, his left on the head of the elder. He did it wittingly, contrary to the wish of his son. If we would have God's blessing, we must leave God to apportion it according to his own purposes. Jacob knew nothing at the time of the way in which Levi would be merged as it were in the other tribes, and so leave a place

for Ephraim to come in. But he knew that somehow or other a place of distinction was reserved for Ephraim. Thus faith transcends all natural anticipations, and contradicts oftentimes natural probabilities. Then it is worth while noting how the triumph of faith is blended with the work of retribution. Here is the true exaltation of Joseph. Here is the true fulfilment of those dreams which brought him so much suffering. Something he got of honour in Egypt; but beyond this and more significant is the position of his two sons as being each the founder of a tribe. God can bring to a permanent exaltation those whom jealousy would humble. As to the eminence of Ephraim, notice that it begins even in the wilderness, where the numbers of Ephraim exceed those of Manasseh (Numb. i.). And as to the importance of Ephraim in after history, it may be enough to cite the position of this tribe in the prophecies of Hosea.—Y.

Ver. 22.—*The faith of the dying Joseph.* I. FAITH OCCUPYING ITSELF WITH THE PERSONAL FUTURE. Joseph had lived long in Egypt, been held in great honour there, and had brought his kinsfolk into great comfort. All the ordinary probabilities pointed to a continued residence of the descendants of Jacob in Egypt. Who had better chances than they? One might compare them with the Dutch companions of William of Orange who came over with him at the Revolution, and many of whose descendants now stand high in rank and wealth amongst Englishmen. Joseph, however, had the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob distinctly before his mind. The solemn and unique experiences of father and grandfather and great-grandfather were doubtless frequent topics of meditation. Canaan, not Egypt, was the destined home of his people. And in this future, though he knew not how it was to come about, he felt *he* had a share. And a feeling of this sort should prevail in our hearts as we ponder the future of the Church of Christ. We, while we have our day of earthly opportunity, are bound to contribute towards the manifestation of the inheritance of the sanctified, and we must do it ever with the distinct conviction that *we* have a part in the inheritance. We do something for those who have lived before us, and something for those who have come after us. And so also our successors will do something for us. Each generation of believers adds its part to the capacious and magnificent building in which, when completed, all believers are to dwell together in immortality and glory.

II. FAITH TAKING AN UNNECESSARY PRECAUTION. It really mattered nothing, as to the essence of the inheritance and the promise, where Joseph's bones were laid. But that is a view which to Joseph himself would probably have been quite unintelligible. Sentiment is almost omnipotent in these matters. The dead are taken hundreds of miles, over land and sea, to repose with their own kindred. Joseph's faith, therefore, was not a perfectly instructed faith. But we may even be glad of this, for the very error of his anticipations only makes the reality of his faith in the essential truth more manifest. We must labour to get rid of all error, but intellectual error is a small matter if only our hearts have hold of spiritual truth. We may be cured of a great many vain traditions and popular superstitions, yet not be one whit nearer to a part in the place which Christ is preparing for his people.—Y.

Ver. 23.—*Faith in an infant's destiny.* I. THE POSSIBILITIES IN EVERY INFANT LIFE. These must often be in the view of every thoughtful parent, and the view must be mixed with a good deal of confidence and sanguine expectation. Parents sometimes wish to stamp their own views and purposes on their children, and it is a dreadful shock to them when they find individuality, originality, strength of will, asserting themselves in wholly unexpected directions. Where one thing is expected another thing is found. Where much is expected little is found. And, on the other hand, where little is expected much is found. One knows not what may have been lost to the world through the deaths of so many in early life. The possibilities need to be constantly borne in mind. Not that we are to be particularly on the look-out for genius and exceptional ability. As a rule, these have to be manifested and strongly asserted before they are recognized. But we never know what the *opportunities* of people of ordinary abilities and acquirements may be, and so all children should be guided in the ways of Christ and guarded from the snares of evil, so far as guiding and guarding will avail for this.

"Men think it is an awful sight
 To see a soul just set adrift
 On that drear voyage from whose night
 The ominous shadows never lift;
 But 'tis more awful to behold
 A helpless infant newly born,
 Whose little hands unconscious hold
 The keys of darkness and of morn."

II. THE CERTAINTIES WITH RESPECT TO SOME CHILDREN. Moses is by no means the only child mentioned in Scripture for whom a memorable future might be predicted. Isaac, Samuel, John the Baptist, all stand in the same category. And if we believe that there is a Divine purpose in every human life, then in every generation we are certain some will be raised to do a great work. There will come the needful correspondence between character, circumstances, and opportunities. And one very noticeable point in the biographies of some distinguished men is their neglected childhood. They seem to have grown up anyhow—plants that should have been in a garden left to the chances of the wilderness. But all the time God is really watching over them, guiding them in a way they know not, making hindrances and vexations to turn out for their good. As we look back on the past of the world and count up its eminent saints, its evangelists, its philanthropists, its discoverers, its pioneers in paths of usefulness, we may assure our hearts with the confidence that the future will not be lacking in men of the same sort. We have not the wisdom, and there is no need, to make predictions with respect to particular individuals. But we may infer the future from the past, and say that somewhere now there are "proper children" who will rise to do their work in the Church, the senate, the university, the exchange, in every place where men may be made better and the legitimate comforts of life increased.—Y.

Vers. 24, 25.—*Moses relinquishing earthly advantages.* I. THE CRITICAL MOMENT IN EVERY HUMAN LIFE. Moses has come to manhood, has passed through all the perils of infancy and childhood, perils in which the prudence and courage of others count for the effective safeguards, to find himself at last face to face with the worst perils that can beset a human life. The edict of a tyrant is not so dreadful an evil as the temptations to self-advancement. The hour of temptation is the hour when all available considerations of duty and interest should be gathered together to fortify the heart. The peril to Moses as an infant was practically nothing; Jehovah's miraculous intervention could come in any moment to shield him. But the peril to Moses as a man was very great when the prospect of high rank in the Egyptian court stood right before his eyes. Nay, more; from Moses we may pass to Jesus. Jesus was in no real peril when Herod sent out his band of destroyers to Bethlehem; but in those after years, when he had to face the prospect of toil and suffering, there was a real peril to his inner man—the pressure of considerations which only the peculiar strength of his nature enabled him to resist.

II. THE SERVICE OF FAITH IN SUCH A CRITICAL MOMENT. The spirit of the world says, "Look at the position which you at present occupy—a position thousands would give anything to attain." Moses is the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and what more can he have but the kingdom? If he gives up his position, what has he left? Nothing, truly, unless he has had the revelations given to faith. And these revelations we are sure Moses must have had in abundance. If Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, had revelations of the coming inheritance and glory of their people, is it credible Moses would not also have revelations such as would effectually strip the aspect of the court wherein he lived of all its glitter? When we have the spirit of faith in us, the discouragements of the present are dwarfed before the attractions of the future. It is seen that the life of faith has joys beside which the joys of the life of sight are poor indeed. What are the Pharaohs of Egypt compared with Moses? Mere names. Whereas Moses has contributed to the coming of Christ, that is, to the uplifting and purifying of the whole world. When the critical moment came, the eye of Moses was so purged that he saw where his own real interest lay. He saw which was the better thing for him to choose for his own sake. He saw that, in choosing affliction with the people of God, he was choosing an exceeding great reward, which would more and more manifest itself as such.

III. THE CONSEQUENT NEED FOR A CONSTANT CULTIVATION OF FAITH. We know not when the critical moment may come, therefore we must be ever ready for it. Men must not leave the making of weapons for the day of battle. The experience of a lifetime makes the physician wise and successful in the hour of disease. We must be assiduous in laying up treasures of faith against the day when the persuasions of this world will try us.—Y.

Ver. 29.—*Faith and presumption in terrible contrast.* I. A WAY MADE WHERE NONE SEEMS POSSIBLE. It must be remembered how completely the Israelites were shut in. The land had shut them in; mountains on each side which they could not overpass; the sea in front of them; the Egyptian host behind. Something they must do—either turn upon their pursuers, or march on into the sea, or submit without a struggle. The choice which God gave to them was that of trust in him or destruction. As it were he drove them into the necessity of faith. He did not first of all make the channel through the waters and let the whole of Israel see it, for in that there would have been no calling forth of faith. They were told to go forward while as yet there was no sign of escape. God never makes interferences with the ordinary course of nature unless for a sufficient reason, and therefore he does not make them before the time. Enough was done if the waters opened to let God's people pass and closed again the moment they were through. Our business is to listen and wait for the Divine command telling us what to do. That is our only safety when difficulty and danger appear in every direction. There are many positions in life when human prudence will do something; there is at least a choice between going on in the lower path of human prudence or changing to the higher one of conformity with the will of God. But there are also positions when acceptance of God's provisions is the only chance of safety. After all, difficulty and danger are relative words. They only indicate our weakness. They are meaningless in relation to the power of God. To him there is neither ease nor difficulty, danger or absence from danger. The greatest difficulty and danger men have to face come from being opposed to God. God can make a way through the deepest waters for his friends, and where his enemies appear to have a smooth and straight way he can suddenly fill it with causes of the worst disaster.

II. A WAY CLOSED WHERE ONE SEEMS OPENED. "When two do the same thing, it is not the same thing," says Bengel. The Israelite is one sort of man, the Egyptian quite another. The Israelite is involved in a covenant, a purpose, and a plan. He has not come into this present strait by a kind of chance; he has not drifted there by his own negligence, or rushed there by his own folly. Therefore a way is made for him through the sea. But the Egyptian goes down into this way through the sheerest presumption. The conduct of the Egyptian host is perhaps never sufficiently considered when this narrative is being dealt with. The power of Jehovah, the miracle itself, so fills the mind that the amazing rashness of the Egyptians does not appear. And yet how rash they were! Their recollections of the immediate past should have combined with their present observations to make them pause while yet they were safe. True it is that God destroyed them, but equally true is it that they were self-destroyed. A man cannot be reckoned presumptuous when he acts in accordance with the nature of things, but here were people presuming on the continuance of a miracle. The greatest unbelievers are ever the greatest presumers.—Y.

Vers. 30, 31.—*Believers and unbelievers at Jericho.* I. BELIEVERS OUTSIDE. No illustration of faith is given from the wanderings in the wilderness. In truth, those wanderings were conspicuous for unbelief rather than faith, for apostasy rather than fidelity. At times the people mounted high in faith, and then they fell as low. Just at the time they came to Jericho there was everything in the circumstances of their outward life to inspire them. They were escaped from the wilderness, they had crossed the Jordan, the land of promise was under their feet. The faith asked from them, it will be observed, did not involve anything very difficult in practice. All they had to do was to march in a certain order for seven days round a fortified city. Still though the deed was not difficult, it was a deed of real faith. For the people might well ask what connection there could be between marching round the city and the downfall of it. And assuredly there was no connection of cause and effect between

the mere marching and the mere falling. Another company might have marched till the day of doom without producing the slightest result. In the great works of the Church of Christ instruments are nothing save as the occasions of faith.

II. UNBELIEVERS INSIDE. Our attention is specially called to their unbelief. The world would say, "Why should they be anything else than unbelieving? If Israel had come with all the regular appliances of siege, then the people of Jericho would have felt there was something to believe. Then a real danger would be reckoned as present." We have always to be on our guard against the deceitfulness of appearances, and especially against the appearances of safety. It was not by might, but by the word of Jehovah, that Jericho was to fall, and the procession round the city only signified that the word of doom had gone forth. The procession was a sign of the times. Who knows what might have happened in those seven days if only Jericho had wakened up to inquiry, repentance, and negotiation? Whereas the attitude of the people indicated the most complete self-confidence. It is one of the worst follies of unbelief that unbelievers are so assiduous in guarding against visible, external evils, and so negligent, so indifferent, with respect to the worst evils of all.

III. ONE BELIEVER INSIDE. One, and only one. A woman of no very good reputation, and yet able to discern afar off the ill that was coming. What an encouragement to sinners the faith of Rahab is! For if in *her* heart could be lodged the power of faith, then what heart should be reckoned impenetrable? Rahab, with all her faults, stood far higher than many reputable people in Jericho. She had the one thing needful by way of beginning. Her faith saved her in the hour of temporal destruction to the other inhabitants of Jericho. But, of course, in the end her faith would do her no good unless it led to a life of righteousness and full obedience. Faith saved many in physical matters who came in contact with the miraculous workings of Jesus. But another power must come in, working conviction of sin and spiritual need. Then the faith which was found so mightily operative in the lower sphere will be found equally operative in the higher one.—Y.

Vers. 32—38.—*A summary of the sufferings and trials of believers. Note—*

I. HOW THIS WRITER SPEAKS FROM FULLNESS OF KNOWLEDGE. As one might think, he has already been tolerably copious, but he hints that there is really much more to tell. He has looked through all the records of God's people, and he finds faith everywhere. Thus has been produced in his mind a strong conviction of what man can do when he believes in the right way. And might we not attain to a similar fullness of knowledge? Reading ecclesiastical history, in the widest sense of the term, we should see how much stronger is the man of simple faith than the man of this world, with all his resources and ingenuity. As knowledge and experience of the right things grow, so must convictions with respect to them deepen.

II. HOW HE CLASSIFIES THE EXAMPLES OF FAITH. He shows us faith active and passive—what it can do and what it can bear. By his function the prophet had to be a man of action, and as the result of his action he had also to be a man of suffering. God sent him out to do special deeds—deeds beyond ordinary resources—and then he had also to make ready for sufferings out of the ordinary way. He who would do great things in the sight of God must be ready also to suffer great things. Live on the level of the world, and you may escape much in the way of toil and strain; but try to achieve the things which Christ sets before you, and then you will find you must not only have strong hands, but a brave and patient heart.

III. THERE IS PLENTY OF WORK FOR FAITH YET TO DO. There are kingdoms to be overcome, not by physical force, not by disciplined armies, but by those who, having yielded first of all to truth, know its claims and its power, and believe in persistent pressing of that truth on others. Righteousness has to be worked out, promises have to be appropriated; and if we would inherit the promises, we must accept the conditions of faith and patience. Our faith can achieve great things, and therefore great things are set before it. The faith of a simple, humble Christian has far greater things within its reach than anything to be attained by the unaided human intellect even at its best.

IV. SIMILARLY THERE IS PLENTY OF TRIAL FOR FAITH YET TO ENDURE. The more there is to be done, the more there is to be suffered. Ingenious torments and cruel deaths there may not be, but the spirit of the world is unchanging. Let a man perse-

vere as seeing the invisible one, and he will have to suffer. He may not be stoned, but he will be pelted with the sneers of thoughtless and ignorant men. Those who through mere self-respect would refrain from a blow with the fist yet delight in the most cutting words.—Y.

Ver. 38.—*Seeming unworthiness, real worthiness.* I. THE APPEARANCE OF UNWORTHINESS. Men going about in sheepskins and goatskins, wandering in deserts and mountains, sheltering themselves in dens and caves, have had this judgment passed upon them, in effect if not in form, that they are not worthy of the world. They are banished from this world's social toleration, being held to trouble their fellow-men concerning existing institutions and habits without sufficient reason. The world knows no higher standard whereby to judge a man than its own accepted code. If he travels beyond that code of traditions, proprieties, and decencies, he must be ready to be put down among fanatics, madmen, and incomprehensible people generally. In setting out upon a genuine Christian life, we must reckon among other elements in counting the cost that of our relation to the world's good opinion. If we will not go anywhere or do anything that may lose us the world's good opinion, then we may at once spare ourselves the trouble and effort of being Christians. If we, living in the world, would be reckoned worthy by the living world around us, then we must be conformed to the world. We must consult its fashions, its prejudices, its vested interests. Originality will be pardoned so long as it keeps to the sphere of the intellect; but once let the conscience break forth into originality and individuality, seeing a right and a wrong where the world has not troubled to consider whether there be right or wrong at all, then henceforth for such a daring spirit, faithful to the light from on high, there is banishment from tolerance by the world. To speak the words "for Christ's sake" from the very heart means persecution. For then one cannot keep to mere generalities; renewing of the mind brings that transformation which is itself a loosening of those common projects and views that have bound us to the common society of men.

II. REAL WORTHINESS. By a decisive expression the writer turns the tables on the calm assumptions of worldly criticism. The world says of the Christian, "This man is not worthy of me; he does not correspond with my attainments, my philosophy, my art, my refinements; he says unappreciative, not to say rude, things about them." But now the Spirit of God steps in to pass a judgment on this same judging spirit of the world. The lamp that has been kindled from light of human making presents but a poor show when set beside the lamp kindled from him who is the true Light of the world. Everything in this matter depends upon the eye with which we look at things. Many there must have been in Jerusalem to lament the dreadful change from Saul the Pharisee to Paul the disciple of Jesus. To them it meant apostasy from all that was godly, honourable, and true. But we know that Christian character, shining by its own light, is its own justification. And we also know that the man of this world, fully exposed in the light of actual Christian character, is his own condemnation. Out of his own avowed and justified words and acts he is condemned. The very fact that he thinks himself right proves how utterly he is wrong.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XII.

The exhortation, begun at ch. x. 19, but interrupted at ch. xi. 1 by the chapter on faith, is now taken up again with increased force from the array of examples that have been adduced to support it. Observable in the Greek is the fine roll of the majestic and well-ordered phrases with which this chapter begins, as if the writer had felt the dignity of his subject, and the commanding

power with which he can now approach it. Even the initiatory word *νενεπαύειν*, rather than the usual *ἔπειτα*, or *οὕτως*, or *ἰδί*, adds to the effect.

Ver. 1.—Wherefore let us too ("we also," in the A.V., is wrongly placed), seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience (rather, endurance) the race that is set before us. Christians, still "fighting the good fight of faith," are here

regarded under the image of athletes in the palaestra, contending for a prize. It is a favourite image with St. Paul, not only, we may suppose, because of its appropriateness, but also because of the probable appreciation of it by his readers in consequence of the general interest taken in the famous games (cf. 1 Cor. ix. 24, etc.; 1 Tim. vi. 12; 2 Tim. iv. 7). The idea in this first verse is that of a race (*τρέχοντες ἀγῶνα*). The word *προκειμενον* (*τὸν προκειμενον ἑμὶν ἀγῶνα*) is the usual one in the case of a contest appointed in public games, though, of course, otherwise applicable, as in ch. vi. 18 and xii. 2. "Every weight" (*ὅγκον πάντα*), which we are to "lay aside," or rather put off from us (*ἀποθεσθαι*), means, probably, in the figure, any heavy accoutrement, or other incumbrance, which the runner might have about him. Some, indeed, take *ὅγκον* to denote "obesity"—a sense in which the word is sometimes used, as by Hippocrates, Diodorus, Ælian—and think the allusion is to the training required of athletes for getting into condition. But the word *ἀποθέμενοι* rather suggests as above. In the word *ἁμαρτίαν*, that follows, the figure is dropped, so as to make evident what is meant, but still retained apparently in the epithet *ἐνπερίστατον*. This word, which is found nowhere else either in biblical or classical Greek, has to be interpreted from its derivation, the analogy of similar words, and the context. The usual and most probable view is, deriving it from *περίστασθαι*, to understand "that which easily surrounds us" (equivalent to *τὴν ἐνδόλως περισταμένην ἡμῶς*). Thus Chrysostom: *Ενπερίστατον γὰρ ἡ ἁμαρτία, πᾶσιθεν ἱσταμένη, ἐμπροσθεν, ὀπίσθεν, καὶ ὅπως ἡμῶς καταβάλλουσα* (Chrysostom, 'Hom.' ii. on 2 Cor.). Cf. *περικείται δασύνειαν* (ch. v. 2). It is true that other verbals, similarly derived from *ἵστημι* or its compounds, are not active, but intransitive or passive; thus *περίστατος* means "surrounded," not "surrounding;" *ἀνεπίστατος* means "unguarded," i.e. "not surrounded." Still, as such verbals derived from other verbs are often active, this may be so here, and thus have an intelligible sense in connection with the context. We may understand the figure of a race to be still kept in view, with regard to the runner not only laying aside encumbrances, but also stripping himself of his clothes, which would cling round him and impede his course. (The idea of close personal encirclement thus supposed to be expressed by *ἐνπερίστατον* seems better to suit the figure, as also the governing verb *ἀποθέμενοι*, than that preferred by Delitzsch; viz. of sin getting in our road as we run, as might surrounding obstacles in an actual race: "Peccata currentem et implicant ac sup-

plantant, ut prorsus a cursu impediatur vel in medio subieciat aut corruat," Horneius, quoted by Delitzsch.) The application of the whole figure to Christian athletes is not hard to understand. The encumbrances to be laid aside by them, lest they should be weighted in their race, may include old associations, lingering Jewish prejudices, ties to the world, habits and customs which, whether or not in themselves blameless, might prove clogs and hindrances. Then the "easily besetting sin" would be all such as might cling to them personally, whether in the heart or in habits of life; which, if not got rid of, would be ever like an encircling and impeding robe, crippling alacrity and arresting speed. But further, as runners, however unencumbered for the race, require what in modern phrase is called "pluck" to keep it up to the end, so with the Christian athlete; for there will always be danger of his flagging as his course goes on under trials and difficulties, and this especially in times of persecution. This further requirement is expressed by *ὑπομονῆς*, "with endurance," i.e. throughout to the end. Thus we have presented to us a grand conception of Christians being as athletes contending on the arena of this present world for the crown of immortality; and, as is expressed at the beginning of the verse, under the eager gaze of a vast multitude of unseen spectators, corresponding to those in the crowded seats, rising higher and higher, of an earthly amphitheatre. These unseen spectators are the innumerable saints before us, who have finished their course and are now at rest, but who are as it were in the air around us, watching us from above with sympathy. The word "cloud" (*νέφος*), though applicable to any great multitude, is peculiarly appropriate here, as suggesting the idea of an aerial company. The word "witnesses," too (*μαρτύρων*), though here most obviously to be understood in the sense of *θεαταί*, i.e. witnesses of our contest, may be intended to convey also, as it certainly suggests to the mind, its other well-known meaning—that of witnesses to the faith, or *martyrs* (cf. Acts xxii. 13; Rev. ii. 13; xi. 3; xvii. 6). So the Fathers generally understand it here. The saints before us, as they bore witness to God in life, so are conceived as witnesses also of our like witness now, awaiting the day when, "not without us," they shall be finally perfected.

Ver. 2.—Looking unto the Author and Finisher of our faith (rather, the Leader, or Captain, as in ch. ii. 10, and *Perfector of the faith*, or of faith—faith's Captain and Completer), Jesus; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising

shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. The idea is not, as implied in the A.V. and understood by Chrysostom and other ancients, that Jesus first inspires and then brings to its complete result the individual Christian's faith ("quod cœpit in nobis consummabit"), but (as implied in the word ἀρχηγός, and suiting the context better) that he is the Leader of the whole army of faith, whose standard we are to follow, and whose own completed victory is the enabling cause as well as the earnest of our own. It is no valid objection to this view that he could not have been a Leader in this sense to the faithful ones before his coming, referred to in the last chapter; for, as has been before observed (see on "the reproach of Christ," ch. xi. 26), he is regarded as the Head and Leader, in all ages, of the faithful; and in virtue of his future warfare for mankind the saints of old endured and triumphed:—and certainly Christians, to whom the exhortation is addressed, may look to him in an obvious sense as their Captain to be followed. Nor, again, is there difficulty—apart from that of the whole mystery of the Incarnation—in his being presented to us as himself an example of triumphant faith. For he is elsewhere spoken of as having so "emptied himself" of his Divine glory as to have become like unto us in all things, sin except; and thus to have been sustained during his human life by faith in the unseen, as we are. His addresses to the Father (see especially John xvii.) are strikingly significant in this regard. The expression, "for the joy," etc. (ἀντὶ τῆς προκειμένης αὐτοῦ χαρᾶς), does not mean, as some take it, "instead of the joy which he might have had on earth" (such e.g. as was offered to him by the tempter), but, as is evident from the word προκειμένης, "as set against, i.e. for the sake of, future joy" (cf. ἀντὶ βεβαίως μᾶλλον, ver. 16). Such looking forward to joy with the Father and the redeemed after triumph is expressed in the great intercessory prayer above referred to (John xvii. 5, 13, 22, 23, 24, 26). It may be here observed that anticipation of reward hereafter is among legitimate human motives to a good life. It may be said, indeed, that the highest virtue consists in doing what is right simply because it is right—in fulfilling God's will, whatever may come of it to ourselves; but the hope of a final happy issue comes properly, and indeed inevitably, in as an inspiring and sustaining motive. Aspiration after happiness is a God-given instinct of humanity, necessary for keeping up the life of virtue. There may be some so in love with virtue as to be capable of persevering in lifelong self-denial, though without any faith in a life to come. But human

nature in general certainly requires this further incentive, and Christian faith supplies it. Nor are those who thus work with a view to future joy to be accused of selfish motives, as though they balanced only a greater against a smaller gain. To the true Christian the grand inspiring principle is still the love of God and of his neighbour, and of goodness for its own sake, though the hope of an eternal reward supports and cheers him mightily. Nor, again, is the joy looked forward to a selfish joy. It is the joy of sharing in the triumph of eternal righteousness in company with all the redeemed, whose salvation, no less than his own, he desires and strives for. And, further, with regard to his own individual joy, what is it but the joy of attaining the end of his being, the perfection God meant him for, and to which it is his duty to aspire? Hence Christ would not have been a perfect Example to man had he not been represented as looking forward to "the joy that was set before him."

Ver. 3.—For consider him that hath endured such contradiction of sinners against himself (or, of the sinners against him), lest ye be weary fainting in your souls. The word ἀντιλογία ("contradiction"), though strictly applicable to verbal gainsaying, and thus especially suggesting to our minds the blasphemies and false accusations against Christ, includes opposition of all kinds. It is used in the LXX. for "rebellion" (Hebrew, נִבְּלָה, 2 Sam. xxii. 41; Prov. xvii. 11; cf. Jude 11, τῇ ἀντιλογίᾳ τοῦ Κεφί. (Instead of εἰς ἑαυτὸν (al. εἰς αὐτὸν) there is weighty manuscript authority for εἰς ἑαυτοῦς, equivalent to "against themselves.") "Lest ye be weary," etc., keeps in view the idea of getting tired in a race, the word ἐκλυεσθαι ("faint") being used primarily for corporeal, and figuratively for mental, lassitude (cf. Matt. xv. 32, μήποτε ἐκλυθεῖσι ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ).

Ver. 4.—Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. Here (as in 1 Cor. ix. 26) there is a transition of thought from a race to a combat. Your trials have not yet reached the point of dying in the good fight of faith, as has been the case with some of your brethren before you, who have followed their Leader to the end (cf. ch. xiii. 7).

Vers. 5, 6.—And ye have forgotten (or, have ye forgotten?) the exhortation which speaketh unto you (more correctly, discourses, or reasons, with you; i.e. in the way of fatherly remonstrance) as unto children, My son, etc. This verse introduces a further motive for persevering under prolonged trial, viz. our being assured in Holy Writ of its beneficial purpose as discipline. The quotation is from Prov. iii. 11, 12, as it

is in the LXX. We observe that the word "faint" (*ἐκλίνου*) is the same as was used in ver. 3. In the seventh and following verses this scriptural admonition is applied and commented on.

Vers. 7, 8.—For chastening ye endure; i.e. *It is for chastening that ye endure*. The reading *ἐς τὰς ἐκδηλας ἐνδύμεν*, supported by almost the whole weight of manuscripts (including all the uncials that contain the text), of ancient versions, and commentators (Theophylact being the only certain exception), is decidedly to be accepted instead of the *ἐλ τὰς ἐκδηλας ἐνδύμεν* (equivalent to "if ye endure chastening") of the Textus Receptus. Moreover, it is required for the sense of the passage in regard to the proper meaning of the verb *ἐνδύμεν* ("endure"), which is "to submit to," or "endure patiently," not simply "to undergo." For to say, "if ye endure chastisement patiently, God dealeth with you as sons," has no meaning; our being treated as sons depends, not on the way we take our chastisement, but on our being chastised at all. The use of the preposition *ἐς* to express purpose is common in this Epistle (cf. ch. i. 14, *ἐς διακονίαν*: iii. 5, *ἐς μαρτύριον*: iv. 16, *ἐς βοήθειαν*: vi. 16, *ἐς βεβαίωσιν*); and the essential sense of *τὰς ἐκδηλας* is discipline or education. The drift is the same, whether we take *ἐνδύμεν* as an indicative or an imperative. Thus the next clause of the verse follows suitably: God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is there (or, *who is a son*) whom his father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastening, whereof all (i.e. all God's children, with reference to ch. xi.) have been made partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons (ye are not your father's real children whom he cares for as such).

Ver. 9.—Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us (more correctly, we once had, or, we used to have, the fathers of our flesh as chasteners), and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? This introduces an *a fortiori* argument. We are reminded of the days of our youth, while we were under parental discipline, and bore with it submissively: much more should we submit to the discipline of our heavenly Father, to whom we are as children under training all our life long! Commentators differ as to what is exactly meant by the contrast between "the fathers of our flesh" and "the Father of spirits (*τῶν πνευμάτων*). Some (among moderns Delitzsch) find here a support to the theory of creationism as against traducianism; i.e. that the soul of each individual, as distinct from the body, is a new creation, not transmitted from the parents. This view would have more to go on than it

has, were we justified in implying *ἡμῶν* after *πνευμάτων* ("our spirits," in opposition to "our flesh," preceding). But *τῶν πνευμάτων* seems evidently meant to be understood generally; and the expression (suggested probably by Numb. xvi. 22 and xxvii. 16, "The God of the spirits of all flesh") need imply only that, though God is the original Author of flesh as well as spirit, yet the latter, whether in man or otherwise existing, has in a peculiar sense its parentage from him (cf. Gen. ii. 7, "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul;" also Job xxxiii. 4, "The Spirit of the Lord hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life"). Our earthly parents transmit to us our carnal existence; our spiritual part, in whatever mysterious way derived or inspired, is due to our Divine parentage; and it is in respect of this that we are God's children and accountable to him. But, as has been intimated above, it is not human spirits only that are here in the writer's view. God is the Father of all "the spirits," whether in the flesh or not; all are of Divine parentage, for God himself is Spirit—*Πνεῦμα ὁ Θεός* (John iv. 24). Chrysostom explains thus: *Τῷ πατρὶ τῶν πνευμάτων ἡτοὶ τῶν χαρισμάτων λέγει, ἡτοὶ τῶν εὐχῶν (ψυχῶν), ἡτοὶ τῶν ἀσωμάτων δυνάμεων*.

Ver. 10.—For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. The *a fortiori* argument is thus continued. The discipline of our earthly fathers was "for a few days," i.e. during our childhood only, since which we have been left to ourselves; and even then not necessarily for our greatest advantage; it was only as seemed good to them (*κατὰ τὸ δοκοῦν αὐτοῖς*); it might be injudicious, or even capricious. But our heavenly Father's discipline we may trust to be always good for us, and with a definite final purpose. Though there is here no distinctly expressed antithesis to the "few days" of ordinary parental chastisement, yet one is implied in the last clause; for if God's purpose in chastening us is to make us partakers of his own holiness, we may conclude that the discipline will be continued till the end be attained; and thus also a further reason is implied why Christians should not "faint" under even lifelong trials.

Ver. 11.—Now no chastening seemeth for the present to be joyous, but grievous (literally, *not of joy, but of grief*): nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them which have been exercised thereby. This is a general state-

ment with respect to all chastening, though the expression of its result at the end of the verse is suggested by the thought of Divine chastening, to which alone it is certainly, and in the full sense of the words, applicable. "Of righteousness" is a genitive of apposition; *δικαιοσύνη* is the peaceable fruit yielded by *παιδεία*. And the word here surely denotes actual righteousness in ourselves; not merely justification in what is called the forensic sense: the proper effect of chastening is to make us good, and so at peace with our own conscience and with God. It is by no means thus implied that we can be accepted and so have peace on the ground of our own imperfect righteousness; only that it is in the fruits of faith perfected by discipline that we may "know that we are of the truth, and assure our hearts before him" (cf. Jas. iii. 18, "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace;" also Isa. xxiii. 17, "And the work of righteousness shall be peace").

Ver. 12.—Wherefore lift up (or, *straighten* *αὐαίς*) the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees (rather, *the relaxed hands and the loosened or enfeebled knees*). The word *παρὰλυνόμενα* is used only by St. Luke elsewhere in the New Testament, and with reference to persons paralyzed (Luke v. 18, 24; Acts viii. 7; ix. 33). The form of the exhortation is taken from Isa. xxxv. 3, *ἰσχύσατε χεῖρας ἀνεμύνει καὶ γόνατα παρὰλυνόμενα*. The figure of the palestra is thus again brought into view, with reference both to boxing and running.

Ver. 13.—And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but that it rather be healed. The ideas in this verse correspond to, and may be suggested by, those that follow in Isaiah the passage above referred to. For there too the prophet goes on to speak, among other things, of the lame leaping, and of a way of holiness along which none should err. But the words themselves are suggested by Prov. iv. 26, *Ἀνὴρ δὲ ὁρθὸς ποιήσει τὰς τροχίους σου* (LXX.), the verb *διοστρέφασθαι* having been previously used for turning out of the way. It is observable that the words, *καὶ τροχίους*, etc., are arranged so as to form an hexameter line. This may have been unintentional, but it is at any rate effective. Delitzsch remarks on it: "The duty to which the writer urges his readers is courageous self-recovery in God's strength. The tone and language are elevated accordingly, and ver. 12 is like a trumpet-blast. It need not surprise us, then, if our author here turns poet, and proceeds in heroic measures." With regard to the purport of this verse, we observe that, while the figure of running is still continued, a new idea is introduced—that

of pursuing a straight course with a view to others who are to follow on the same track. "That which is lame (*τὸ χωλόν*)" denotes the weak and wavering brethren—the *ἀσθενεῖς*, such as are referred to in Rom. xiv. and 1 Cor. viii. The expression well suits especially those among the Hebrew Christians who halted between two opinions—between the Church and the synagogue (cf. 1 Kings xviii. 21, *ἕως ὅτε ὑμεῖς χωλαίνετε ἐν ἀμφοτέραις ταῖς ὑγῆαῖς*);). The strong in faith ought to desire and aim at the *healing* of such lame ones, i.e. their being strengthened in the faith, rather than expose them to the risk of apostasy by any wavering of their own.

Ver. 14.—Follow peace with all (i.e. as required by the context, with all the brethren; cf. Rom. xiv. 19), and holiness (more properly, *sanctification*), without which no man shall see the Lord. Here the figure is dropped, and two cautions given, peculiarly needed, we may suppose, by the community addressed. The exhortation to "peace with all" reminds of the tone of St. Paul's admonitions both in Romans and in 1 Corinthians, where he so strongly warns against dissensions and party spirit, and enjoins tolerance and mutual allowance with regard to the weaker brethren. The word *ἁγιασμός* ("sanctification") need not be limited (as by Chrysostom) to the idea of *chastity*; the general thought implied may be (as expressed by Limborch, quoted by Alford), "Ne, dum paci studeat, nimis aliis obsequendi studio quidquam contra sanctioniam Christianam delinquat;" but the special allusion to *σωφροσύνη* in ver. 16 (as also in ch. xiii. 4) is evidence that *chastity* was especially in the writer's mind, with definite reference to which the word *ἁγιασμός* is used in 1 Thess. iv. 3. The frequent and earnest warnings against fornication in St. Paul's Epistles are enough to show how slow even some in the Church were to recognize the strict code of Christian morality, unknown to the heathen world, and by the Jews very imperfectly recognized, in this regard; and the case of 1 Cor. v. illustrates how easily such vice might creep into and infect a Christian community without general reprobation. Hence probably the special warning here.

Ver. 15.—Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God (i.e. fall short of it; or, *ὑστερήσῃ* being here followed by *ἀπὸ*, the idea may be rather that of falling back from it); lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many (or, according to the more probable reading, *the many*, i.e. the general community) be defiled. In this, the usual rendering of the verse, *ᾧ* is supplied, so as to make *μήτις ὑστερήσῃ* mean "lest there be any one that fails." But this

is not necessary; the verb *ἐνοχλῶ* ("trouble you") may be common both to the first *μήτις* and to *μήτις βίβα*, thus: "Lest any one falling . . . lest any root . . . trouble you." The sentence may have been broken off after its first clause in order to bring in the appropriate quotation from Deut. xxix. 18, which in our A.V. runs thus: "Lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood." The Vatican text of the LXX. has *Μήτις ἐστὶν ἐν ὑμῖν βίβα ἢ φέουσα ἐν χολῇ καὶ πυκρῇ*: the Alexandrian, which seems to be followed here, has *Μήτις ἐστὶν ἐν ὑμῖν βίβα πυκρῇ ἢ φέουσα ἐνοχλῶ καὶ πυκρῇ*. The reference in the speech of Moses is to the future possibility of any "man, or woman, or family, or tribe" turning from the Lord to go and serve the gods of the nations, and so involving, not only themselves, but even the whole people in a curse. The figure is that of a plant being allowed to grow of such a nature at its root as to bear bitter and pernicious fruit. There is no special allusion in the word "bitterness" to disturbance of "peace" by dissensions; for this is not the idea in the original passage, nor is it carried out in the following verses of the Epistle. (Cf. Acts viii. 23, "Thou art in the gall of bitterness (*ἐν χολῇ πυκρῇ*).")

Vers. 16, 17.—Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited (*i.e.* desired to inherit) the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. The word "fornicator" is to be understood literally, not figuratively (as Ebrard) of spiritual fornication (see *ἀγασμὸν*, ver. 14). *Βέβηλος* ("profane") denotes one outside the sphere of sanctity, and so debarred from sacred privileges. Esau is appropriately adduced as a notable instance in the Old Testament of a person thus profane, and especially, in the way of warning, of one who lost irrecoverably the privileges which in his profaneness he had scorned. It is immaterial whether Esau himself is intended to be designated as a fornicator (*πόρνος*) as well as profane (*Βέβηλος*). The essential moral of his history is this: being the firstborn of Israel, and so the primary inheritor of the promises made to Abraham, he set no store by the privilege, and so lost it irretrievably. In early life he so lightly esteemed his birthright as the eldest born (carrying with it, as is supposed, in the patriarchal age, the priesthood of the family, and in his case, as might be presumed, the custody and transmission of the promises) that he parted with it for the gratification of a passing appetite. His words on that occasion expressed the

limit of his aims and interests: "Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" Later in life he nevertheless presented himself to claim the blessing of the firstborn from his dying father, but found that he had been forestalled. It does not appear that he had meanwhile changed his mode of life or made amends for his former carelessness; still, he felt now that he had lost something worth having, and was grieved exceedingly. But not even his "great and exceeding bitter cry" availed then to recover what was forfeited. And so neither he nor his seed had part or lot in the Abrahamic promises: the time of opportunity was gone for ever. There is some doubt with regard to the latter part of ver. 17, (1) as to whether "it" (*αὐτὴν*) in "he sought it" refers to "repentance" (*μετάνοια*) or to "the blessing" (*τὴν εὐλογίαν*); (2) as to what "place of repentance" means. If "it" refers to "repentance," it is difficult to see how Esau's own repentance can be meant; for not only does seeking repentance with tears seem in itself to imply the capability of it, but also the "great and exceeding bitter cry" to which allusion is made was, not because he could not himself repent, but because he could not get the blessing. Hence, if "it" refers to "repentance," it must be repentance, *i.e.* change of mind, in Isaac that is meant, or rather in God, against whose will Isaac could not go; cf. "God is not a man . . . that he should repent" (Numb. xxiii. 19). Of such change of mind and purpose it may be meant that Esau found no place. This seems to be the view of many modern interpreters, though not of Bengel, De Wette, Bleek, Hofmann, Delitzsch, Alford, or of Luther, Calvin, Grotius, or any of the Greek Fathers. Against it is the consideration that such is not the more obvious meaning of "he found no place of repentance," taken by itself, especially as *μετάνοια* is always elsewhere in the New Testament (though not always in the LXX.) used for a person's change of mind with respect to his own misdoings (cf. *supra*, ch. vi. 6). Difficulty on this ground is removed if, taking the clause, "for he found no place of repentance," as parenthetical, we refer *αὐτὴν* to *τὴν εὐλογίαν* preceding. This is by no means a forced construction of the sentence, and it is supported (as above intimated) by the fact that in Genesis it is the blessing itself that Esau is expressly said to have craved in his "great and exceeding bitter cry": "Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept." Thus we may render either, "When he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance [*i.e.* of

change of mind in the bestower of the blessing], though he sought it [i.e. such change of mind] with tears; or, "When he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected (for he found no place of repentance), though he sought it [i.e. the blessing] with tears." If the latter rendering being adopted, Esau's own repentance be intended, the idea may be, either that there was no place left in which even a real repentance could avail, or that of a real repentance he had become incapable; for his tears might be those only of vexation and remorse, not expressing any more appreciation than before of the birthright in its religious aspect. Ebrard's remark, that his conduct as related in Gen. xxiii. shows "a changed heart," and hence a true repentance, is not to the point. For all that there appears is that he had got over his angry feeling towards his brother; it is by no means implied—rather the contrary—that he would have preferred his destiny to his own, or that his views of life had risen above thoughts of worldly prosperity. We observe, further, that nothing is implied one way or the other as to Esau's own salvation; it is only the privilege of being the patriarch of the chosen seed that he is said to have thus irrecoverably forfeited. But his example is adduced as a warning to Christians with regard to their still more precious inheritance, which does involve their own eternal prospects. The warning to them is similar to those of ch. vi. 4, etc., and ch. x. 26, etc., to the effect that sacred privileges, if persistently slighted, may be lost beyond recovery. And if the passage before us seems to imply, according to one view of it, what the former ones were found not to do, the possible inefficacy of a true repentance, however late,—we may say that, even if this is implied of Esau with respect to his lost blessing, it is not therefore necessarily implied of Christians with respect to their personal salvation; or that, if it is implied of them, it is not till their probation in this life is over that a "place of repentance" in this sense can for them be found no more (cf. the parable of the ten virgins (Matt. xxv. 1, etc.); also Matt. vii. 22, etc.; Luke xiii. 24, etc.). One of Dr. Newman's Parochial Sermons ("Life the Season of Repentance," vol. vi. 'Sermon' 2) strikingly sets forth this view. See also 'Christian Year' (Second Sunday in Lent), with the appended note: "Esau's probation, as far as his birthright was concerned, was quite over when he uttered the cry in the text. His despondency, therefore, is not parallel to anything on this side the grave."

Vers. 18—29.—There follows now, both for encouragement and for warning, a grand contrast between the Mosaic and Christian

dispensations, founded on the phenomena that accompanied the giving of the Law. To Mount Sinai, with its repelling terrors, is opposed an ideal picture of Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem, expressive of the communion of saints in Christ. And then at ver. 25 (as previously in ch. x.) the tone of encouragement changes again to one of warning, the very excess of privilege being made the measure of the guilt of slighting it.

Ver. 18.—For ye are not come unto a mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and unto blackness and darkness and tempest. The allusion is to the Israelites approaching Mount Sinai when the Law was given (see Deut. iv. 11, whence still more than from Exod. xix. the whole description is taken, "And ye came near [προσῆλθετε, the same word as is used *supra*, ch. iv. 16; vii. 25], and stood under the mountain"). Though the word "mount" in the Received Text has the support of no ancient authority, it must be understood, whether or not originally written. For it comes after προσῆλθετε in the passage of Deuteronomy which is evidently referred to, the following words, "blackness, darkness, tempest" (σκότος, γρόφος, θύελλα), being also found there. And otherwise we should have to translate, "a touched [i.e. palpable] and kindled fire;" but "touched" (ψηλαφώμενον) is not suitable to fire; and we should also lose the evidently intended contrast between the two mountains of Sinai and Zion, which appears in ver. 22. Neither may we translate, as some would do, "a mountain that might be touched, and kindled fire;" for the original passage in Deuteronomy has "and the mountain burned with fire (καὶ τὸ ὄρος ἐκατέρο πυρ)." The participle ψηλαφώμενον (literally, "that was touched"), rather than ψηφαλητῶ, may be used here, although on the occasion referred to all were forbidden to touch the mountain, by way of bringing more distinctly into view the actual Sinai, which *was* touched at other times, and which Moses both touched and ascended. If so, the main purpose of the word is to contrast the local and palpable mountain of the Law with the ideal Mount Zion which is afterwards spoken of. Or, the verb ψηφάλαω may here carry with it its common sense of groping after, as in the dark (cf. Deut. xxviii. 29, καὶ ἔσθ' ψηλαφῶν μεσημβρίας, ἐσεὶ ψηλαφήσαι δ' τυφλὸς ἐν τῇ σκότει), with reference to the cloudy darkness about Sinai, and in contrast with the clear unclouded vision of Zion.

Vers. 19—21.—And the sound of a trumpet (Exod. xix. 16), and the voice of words (Deut. iv. 12); which voice they that heard entreated that no word should be spoken to them more (Deut. xviii. 16; cf. ver. 25 and

Exod. xx. 18): for they could not endure that which was commanded (rather, *enjoined*). If even a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned (Exod. xix. 13; "or thrust through with a dart" is an interpolation in the text from the passage in Exodus): and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake (Deut. ix. 19, *ἐκφοβός εἰμι*, to which *καὶ ἐτρόμος* is added in the text. This saying of Moses was really uttered afterwards, when he was descending from the mount, and became aware of the sin of the golden calf. It was called forth by the people's sin, but was due to the alarming character of the preceding phenomena, of *τὸ φαντασθένον*, that which was being revealed or manifested. Mention of it is added here to show that the general fear extended even to Moses, the mediator). This whole account, thus powerfully condensed from Exodus and Deuteronomy, presents a vivid picture of the terrors of the Mosaic revelation. God was, indeed, revealed to man, but still as unseen and unapproachable, terrible in his wrath against sin, and surrounded by sounds and sights of fear: But now mark the serene and glorious contrast.

Vers. 22—24. —But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. Here, as in Gal. iv., Zion and Jerusalem, ideally regarded, are contrasted with Sinai. The foundation of the conception is in the Old Testament. When David at length won the citadel of Zion, and placed the ark upon it, it was a sort of primary and typical fulfilment of the promise of rest, seen afar off by the patriarchs and from the wilderness. Ps. xxiv., which was sung on that occasion, expresses the idea of the King of glory being at length enthroned there, and his people of clean hands and pure hearts being admitted to stand in the holy place before him (cf. "This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell," Ps. cxxxii. 14). In the Psalms generally the holy hill of Zion continues to be viewed as the Lord's immovable abode, where he is surrounded by thousands of angels, and whence he succours his people (cf. Ps. xlviii.; lxxviii.; cxv.; cxxxii.; etc.). Then by the prophets it is further idealized as the scene and centre of Messianic blessings (cf. Isa. xlii.; xxv. 13; xxxiii.; xxxv.; xli. 13; Micah iv.; to which many other passages might be added). Compare also the visions, in the latter chapters of Ezekiel, of the ideal city and temple of the future age. Lastly, in the Apocalypse the seer has visions of "Mount Zion" (xiv.), and "the holy city, new Jerusalem" (xxi.), with the presence there of God and the Lamb, and with myriads of angels, and innumerable multitudes of saints redeemed. If, in the

passage before us, a distinction is to be made between "Mount Zion" and "the heavenly Jerusalem," it may be that the former represents the Church below, the latter the heavenly regions, though both are blent together in one grand picture of the communion of saints. For so in Rev. xiv. the hundred and forty-four thousand on Mount Zion seem distinct from the singers and harpers round the throne, whose song is heard from heaven and learnt by those below; while the picture of the holy city in Rev. xxi. is one entirely heavenly, representing there the final consummation rather than any present state of things. And to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn (rather, and to myriads, the general assembly of angels, and the Church of the Firstborn), which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel (literally, *than Abel*). Of the several ways of translating the beginning of the above passage, the best seems to be to take *μυριάδων* by itself as including both the angels and the Church of the Firstborn, and to connect *παιγγόροι* with "angels" only. "Myriads" is a well-known expression for the Lord's attendant hosts (cf. Jud. 14; Deut. xxx. 2; Dan. vii. 10); further, *καὶ*, which throughout the passage connects the different objects approached, comes between *παιγγόροι* and *ἐκκλησία*, not between *ἄγγέλων* and *παιγγόροι*; and the application of both *παιγγόροι* and *ἐκκλησία* to *πρωτόγεντων* would seem an unmeaning redundancy. The word *παιγγόροις*, which in classical Greek denotes properly the assembly of a whole nation for a festival, is peculiarly appropriate to the angels, whether regarded (as in the Old Testament) as ministering round the throne or as congregated to rejoice over man's redemption. "The Church of the Firstborn" seems to denote the Church militant rather than the Church triumphant; for (1) *ἐκκλησία* is elsewhere used for the Church on earth (so also in the Old Testament; cf. Ps. lxxix. 6); (2) the phrase, *ἐν οὐρανοῖς ἀπογεγραμμένων*, expresses the idea of being enrolled in the books of heaven rather than being already there (cf. Luke x. 20; Phil. iv. 3; Rev. xx. 12; xxi. 27); (3) the "spirits of the perfected" are mentioned afterwards as a class distinct. The word *πρωτόγεντων* may be suggested here by the firstborn of Israel, who were specially hallowed to the Lord (Numb. iii. 13), and numbered as such by Moses (Numb. iii. 43), or perhaps still more by the birthright (*πρωτογένεια*) spoken of above as forfeited by Esau. God's elect may be called his firstborn as being hallowed

to him and heirs of his promises (cf. Exod. iv. 22, "Israel is my son, *even* my firstborn;" and Jer. xxxi. 9, "Ephraim is my firstborn"). They thus correspond to the hundred and forty-four thousand of Rev. xiv., standing on Mount Zion, being "redeemed from the earth," and having "the Father's Name written on their foreheads;" seen distinct from, and yet in communion with, the saints in bliss, whose voices are heard above. Between them and the spirits of the perfected is interposed, "God the Judge of all;" and this appropriately, since before him the saints on earth must appear ere they join the ranks of the perfected: the former look up to him from below; the latter have already passed before him to the rest assigned them. *Τεταλειωμένοι* ("perfected") expresses, as elsewhere in the Epistle, full accomplishment of an end or purpose with regard to things or persons (cf. ch. ii. 10; v. 9; vii. 19, 28; ix. 9; x. 1, 14; xi. 40); the word is used here of those whose warfare is accomplished, and who have attained the rest of God. Their "spirits" only are spoken of, because the "perfect consummation and bliss both in body and soul" is still to come. In the mean while, with respect to the issue of their earthly course, they have been already perfected (cf. Rev. xiv. 13, "They rest from their labours"). Corresponding to the Lamb in Revelation,

there is seen next Jesus the Mediator, through whom is the approach of the whole company to the Judge of all, and the accomplishment to the perfected. The "new covenant" is, of course, meant to be contrasted with the old one before Mount Sinai, under which there was no such approach or accomplishment. Then "the blood of sprinkling" has reference to that wherewith the old covenant was ratified (Exod. xxiv.; cf. *supra*, ch. ix. 18). The blood shed by Christ on earth for atonement is conceived as carried by him with himself into the holy place on high (cf. ch. ix. 12), to be for ever "the blood of sprinkling" for effectual cleansing. And this blood "speaketh better things than Abel." His blood cried from the ground for vengeance, with the accusing voice of primeval sin; Christ's speaks only of reconciliation and peace. Some commentators (Bengel in the first place, whom Delitzsch follows) see in this contrast between Sinai and Zion a distinct parallelism between vers. 18, 19 and vers. 22—24; seven objects of approach in one case being supposed to be set against seven in the other. More obvious is the correspondence of the successive clauses of vers. 22—24 to the general ideas connected with the giving of the Law. The two pictures may be contrasted thus—

The Old Covenant.

Sinai, a palpable earthly mountain, surrounded by gloom and storm.

The angels through whom the Law was given (cf. ch. ii. 2; Gal. iii. 19; Acts vii. 53; Deut. xxxiii. 2), unseen by men, but operating in the winds and in the fire (cf. ch. i. 7).

Israel congregated under the mountain, afraid, and forbidden to touch it.

The Lord, unapproachable, shrouded in darkness or revealed in fire.

Moses, himself afraid, and winning through his mediation no access for the people.

The blood sprinkled on the people to ratify the old covenant, but which could not cleanse the conscience.

The sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, inspiring fear.

Such is the vision by the contemplation of which the inspired writer would arouse his readers, amid their trials and waverings, to realize the things that are eternal. He would have them pierce with the eye of faith beyond this visible scene into the world invisible, which is no less real. If

The New Covenant.

Zion, radiant with light and crowned with the city of God.

Festal choirs of assembled angels.

The accepted Church of the Firstborn, with free approach to the holiest of all.

The Judge of all, without his terrors, accessible, and awarding rest to the perfected.

The Divine availing Mediator.

The ever-cleansing blood of complete atonement.

The voice of that cleansing blood, speaking of peace and pardon.

they were perplexed and disheartened by what they found around them—by the opposition of the world and the fewness of the faithful—he bids them associate themselves in thought with those countless multitudes who were on their side. The picture is, indeed, in some respects, ideal; for the actual

Church on earth does not come up to the idea of the "Church of the Firstborn;" but it is presented according to God's purpose for his people, and it rests with us to make it a present reality to ourselves.

Ver. 25.—See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not, refusing him that spake (rather, *warned*; the word here used is not *λαλοῦντα*, as before, but *χρηματίζοντα*, expressive of a Divine admonition or warning. In the passive it is translated "warned of God," "admonished of God," Matt. ii. 12, 22; ch. viii. 5; xi. 7; cf. Acts x. 22, *ἐχρηματίσθη ὑπὸ ἀγγέλου ἁγίου*) on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh (or, *warneth*) from heaven. Here the warning begins. "Him that speaketh (*τὸν λαλοῦντα*)," is suggested by *λαλοῦντι* in the preceding verse. But the subject is changed: it is God, not the "blood of sprinkling," that is now regarded as speaking to us from heaven. It was God also that warned on earth; not, as some take it, Moses, whom the word *χρηματίζοντα* does not suit: of him it is said, *κηρυχθέντα* (ch. viii. 5). The allusion is to the voice heard from the earthly Sinai, which the people entreated (*supra*, ver. 19, *παρητήσαντο*—the same word as is used here) should be heard no more. But they escaped not the hearing of that voice, or the consequences of disregarding its warning (cf. ch. ii. 2; iii. 10).

Ver. 26.—Whose voice then shook the earth (see Exod. xix. 18, "The whole mount quaked greatly," though there the LXX. has *λαός* instead of *ἔσος*; but cf. Judg. v., "The earth trembled," and Ps. cxiv. 7, "Tremble, thou earth," etc., with reference to the phenomena at Sinai; also Hab. iii. 6, 10): but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. The prophecy referred to is Hag. ii. 6, 7, "Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts." Again, ver. 21, "I will shake the heavens and the earth" (cf. Isa. ii. 19, 21). The prophecy was uttered with reference to the second temple, the glory of which was to be greater than the glory of the first, in that it should be the scene of the Lord's final revelation of himself to his people. Its first fulfilment is rightly seen in Christ's first coming (cf. Hab. ii. 9, "And in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts:" and Mal. iii. 1, "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple"). But the language used points evidently, even in itself, to a further fulfilment; nor do readers need to be reminded here of the pregnant

and far-reaching sense of all Messianic prophecy. "Illustro est testimonium Is. Newtoni ad Dan. p. 91: *rizus in omni V. T. aliquod de Christo erat vaticinium, quod non, aliquatenus saltem, secundum ejus adventum respiciat*" (Bengel). The ultimate reference is what is seen dimly afar off in so many of the prophetic visions—the final dissolution of the whole present order of things, to be succeeded by the kingdom of eternal righteousness (cf. Ps. cii. 25, etc.). By the heaven that is to be shaken in that great day is meant, of course, not the eternal abode of God, but that which is created and visible (*τὸν πεποιημένον*, ver. 27). This final shaking is set against the local and typical shaking of Mount Sinai in two points of contrast—its extending to the whole creation, and its being once for all (*ἐν ἑκτά*); and from the latter expression the removing of the things thus finally shaken is in the next verse inferred. This inference, though not following necessarily from the expression itself, is involved in the general drift of Haggai's prophecy, taken in connection with other cognate ones, in which an entirely new and heavenly order is pictured as rising over the ruins of the old (cf. Isa. lxi. 17; lxvi. 22, referred to in 2 Pet. iii. 7, 10, 13, "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Vers. 27—29.—And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain. Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken (observe the present participle, *παράλαβόντες*: we already belong to this kingdom, which exists now behind the veil of this visible scene, and will survive its catastrophe; observe also that the phrase, *βασίλειαν παράλαβόντες*, corresponds with Dan. vii. 18, *Καὶ παραλήψονται τὴν βασιλείαν ἄγιοι ὑψίστου*—it implies an actual share in the royalty of the kingdom; cf. Eph. v. 5; Rev. i. 6; v. 10), let us have grace (or, *thankfulness*; the usual meaning of *ἔχω χάριν* is "to be thankful," or "to give thanks," as in Luke xvii. 9; 1 Tim. i. 12; 2 Tim. i. 3), whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire. This last verse is from Deut. iv. 24, where the Israelites are being warned of the danger of forgetting the covenant of the Lord their God. The Lord's nature is not changed: he is still a consuming fire against evil, as he declared himself from Sinai; and if we scorn the present dispensation of grace, the day of judgment will still be to us a day of terror (cf. *supra*, ch. x. 26, etc.).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—3.—*The life of faith, and its supreme Exemplar.* In these verses the apostle gathers up the practical lesson to be derived from his historical demonstration of the power of faith contained in ch. xi. The figure of the passage is that of a race which the believer is required to run, the reference being doubtless to the foot-race in the Grecian games.

I. THE CHRISTIAN RACE. (Ver. 1.) Glance here at the points of analogy, or truths intended to be taught by this figure. The life of faith is: 1. *An arduous struggle.* "The righteous is with difficulty saved" (1 Pet. iv. 18). The Christian calling is not a stroll or a saunter, but a race. It entails strenuous effort. 2. *A struggle which involves fixedness of aim.* It is "set before us." There is a goal to be kept in view, and a prize to be won; and there is, accordingly, a prescribed path of faith and duty. 3. *A struggle which involves perseverance.* The believer must "run with patience." He must not allow his ardour to decline. He must not desist until he finishes his course. 4. *A struggle which will soon be over.* "Yet a very little while," and the Christian shall have reached the goal, and won Christ. 5. *A public spectacle.* "We are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses." We run this race under the eye of God himself. Other spectators are the holy and the fallen angels, "the spirits of just men made perfect," our fellow-believers on earth, and the ungodly world around us.

II. THE CONDITIONS OF SUCCESSFUL RUNNING. (Ver. 1.) The Olympic runner put off his flowing robes, and everything else that might impede his course. So the Christian is to "lay aside," 1. *Weights.* This word denotes whatever would put one to disadvantage in running, whether it be in itself innocent or not. Of course every evil passion is a weight, which can only clog the believer's heavenward progress. But even that which is in itself lawful may become, if we abuse it, a heavy load. We may pervert a good gift of God into a dead weight. And some habit which is no hindrance at all to my Christian brother may have proved to be a great spiritual cumbrance to me. There is, e.g., the weight of prosperity, of care, of sorrow; the weight of worldly business, of earthly ambition, of human affection. "The things which are seen" must not be allowed to lie heavy on the soul, if we would successfully run the Christian race. 2. *Sin.* This is the essential burden. It "easily besets us," i.e. cleaves to us, wraps itself round us like a cloak, clings to us as a parasitical plant to a tree. It is sin in general which the apostle characterizes as "easily besetting." The adjective in the original does not refer to the particular sins, whatever these may be, to which individuals are most prone; although, of course, in taking home the exhortation to the conscience, this thought will naturally be suggested. The writer probably had in his mind just now (indeed, he never forgets it throughout this letter) the sin of apostasy—the danger to which the Hebrew Christians were exposed of drifting back to Judaism, and thus of "falling away from the living God" (ch. iii. 12). This sin, and all others, must be laid aside. If we do not renounce sin, we give up the race.

III. ENCOURAGEMENTS TO PERSEVERE IN RUNNING. In the midst of affliction and weariness, as well as of powerful temptations to apostatize, how are our fainting hearts to be revived? Two great motives are presented. 1. *The presence, as spectators, of the former heroes of faith.* (Ver. 1.) The Old Testament saints are "witnesses" now of the race which they once ran themselves. They not only testify to the power of faith; they are also spectators of the struggles and conflicts of their successors. The apostle's language is not that merely of poetic imagination. He seems to say that "the spirits of just men made perfect" are cognizant of what is done upon the earth, and take an absorbing interest in it. We are to think of them as hovering over us in the heavens. They circle and crowd around us, tier upon tier, on both sides of the race-course. On the one side is the gallery of the saints before the Flood, that of the Hebrew Pilgrim Fathers, of the heroes of the Exodus, of the judges, and of the prophets; while on the other side is the gallery of the apostles, that of the Christian confessors and martyrs, of the missionaries of the Church, and of our own departed friends who have gone to glory. These spectators are a "great cloud"—multitudinous in number; they are radiant with the brightness of immortality; and, having themselves passed through the same experience as we, they keenly sympathize with us. We should therefore take heart,

as we hear their heavenly greetings, and realize the fellowship with us which they claim. 2. *The example of Jesus, the Leader and Perfecter of faith.* (Vers. 2, 3.) While gratefully conscious of the presence of the men of faith, we are to gaze fixedly only upon Jesus. The writer refers to the Saviour here in his human nature, as the Pattern Man, and as our supreme Exemplar. His portrait is the grandest in the whole exhibition of the heroes of faith; indeed, none of those in ch. xi. can for a moment compare with it. This noblest picture is arranged in two divisions; we see Christ on the one side in his humiliation, and on the other in his exaltation. And the inscription set over it reads thus: "Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of faith." He is the *Author*, i.e. Captain, Prince, Head, or Leader, of all the men of faith. He exhibited, during his own earthly life, an absolutely perfect example of trust in God. By faith he waited at Nazareth, with his high destiny stirring in his heart, during thirty years. By faith he assumed the burden of the world's sin. By faith he conquered Satan in the wilderness. By faith he performed the labours of his three years' active ministry. By faith he endured the agonies of Gethsemane, and the "gainsaying" (ver. 3) of Gabbatha, and the soul-darkness of Golgotha. Jesus did not "shrink back unto perdition," notwithstanding his unparalleled temptations. So he is also the "*Perfecter of faith*;" for in him faith has had its perfect work. No other man will ever appear in our world equal to him as a specimen of faith. Therefore he is our great Model. The early Hebrew Christians were to "consider him." That very "cross" at which they stumbled, he "endured." If they were being treated by "sinners" (ver. 3) as renegades from the religion of Israel, much more had he been. Their sufferings and temptations were not nearly so dreadful as his. Seeing, then, that the Man Christ Jesus, for the sake of the eternal reward in store for him, persevered to the end in running his appointed race, why should any of his followers allow themselves to "wax weary, fainting in their souls"? It was his endurance of the cross that gave him his place "at the right hand of the throne of God;" and all who follow him as their Leader in the race of faith shall eventually sit with him upon his throne.

CONCLUSION. 1. Life or death depends upon whether or not we run the Christian race. 2. Christ will give us strength to run well, if we ask him. 3. He will crown us at the end, bestowing himself upon us as the Prize.

Vers. 4—11.—*Chastisement.* In this passage the writer reminds the Hebrews that although doubtless they had sustained severe trials on account of their devotedness to Christ, none of them had yet been required to seal their faith with their blood (ver. 4). Other children of God had suffered much more than they (ch. xi. 35—38), and had remained faithful. For them to apostatize would, therefore, be very heinous sin. Rather they must learn to view their afflictions as the corrections of God's fatherly love. Consider—

I. THE FACT OF CHASTISEMENT. 1. *Our afflictions are really such.* Sometimes, in forgetfulness of God, the believer may regard his sorrows simply as calamities—untoward events which have no particular spiritual meaning. At other times he may receive them merely as trials of his faith, or as sent to strengthen his Christian graces. But this passage reminds us that we greatly err if we do not find in our troubles the element of chastisement. It is true that Jesus Christ has borne the essential penalty of his people's sins; but, though he has done so, he has not removed any lesser punishment which we may require in order to the correcting of our faults. God "forgives" us, but he "takes vengeance of our inventions" (Ps. xcix. 8). 2. *Chastisement is inevitable.* The Lord "scourgeth every son" (ver. 6). "All have been made partakers" of it—all the Old Testament saints, and all believers in Christian times. The unchastened man is a bastard. 3. *Chastisement is various in kind and in degree.* There are, e.g., disease of body, distress of mind, the loss of property, injury of character, the profligacy of children, the faithlessness of friends, persecution for righteousness' sake. 4. *Chastisement is severe.* He "scourgeth" (ver. 6). The Lord's rod draws blood. It checkers the believer's life with wales (Isa. i. 5, 6). The Christian "bears branded on his body the marks of Jesus" (Gal. vi. 16).

II. GOD'S PURPOSE IN CHASTISEMENT. It is a gracious purpose. Divine penalties fall upon the believer as a necessary discipline. The love as well as the righteousness of God prompts to these retributions. Chastisement is sent: 1. *To correct our faults.*

Possibly there are certain sins of ours in regard to which correction is needed, that we may be led to repent of them; and, when affliction overtakes us, we should endeavour to find out what these sins are. Or, perhaps, a life of ease and prosperity may have seduced us into spiritual carelessness, and favoured the growth of pride within the soul. In such a case God sends chastisement to convince us of the vanity of the world, and to attract our thoughts towards the things which belong to our peace. 2. *To form our spiritual character.* Correction is sent as a means of assimilating our moral nature to that of God himself (ver. 10). Sorrow accepted as Divine chastisement refines and sanctifies the soul. It stirs its tenderest emotions, and touches its richest chords. It draws the heart towards God himself, as its only Rest and Strength and Joy. The most beautiful human faces are not those which show merely the most regular features and the purest complexion; they are those saintly faces which have been beautified by chastisement—"made perfect through sufferings." 3. *To promote our eternal well-being.* The ultimate purpose is that we may "live" (ver. 9), spiritually and eternally. To become "partakers of God's holiness" is to be educated for spending eternity with God. Each believer must pass through a curriculum of chastisement before he can graduate to glory.

"'Tis sorrow builds the shining ladder up,
Whose golden rounds are our calamities,
Whereon our firm feet planting, nearer God
The spirit climbs, and hath its eyes unsealed."

(Lowell.)

III. OUR DUTY IN RELATION TO CHASTISEMENT. This the apostle gently censures his readers for having overlooked, as it is exhibited in the Old Testament Scriptures. He quotes Prov. iii. 11, 12, and adds a few sentences of beautiful and suggestive commentary. The quotation (vers. 5, 6) exhibits the duty negatively, and the comment (vers. 7—11) positively. 1. *Negatively.* (1) *We are not to "despise" chastisement.* (Ver. 5.) We do so when we proudly strive to feel it as little as possible, treating our troubles in a stoical spirit, as if they were meaningless. We do so, too, when we refuse to see God's hand in them, or to believe that they are determined in providence by our spiritual condition. We despise chastisement when we insist that we do not deserve any; and when, in haughty insubordination, we allow ourselves to be "made cross by cross providences." (2) *We must not "faint" under it.* (Ver. 5.) This is the other extreme—to become depressed, despondent, despairing. We abuse chastisement if we do nothing but bemoan it, as Elijah once did (1 Kings xix. 4). We "faint" when we cherish dark and hard and unbelieving thoughts regarding our afflictions—forgetting the blessed purpose that is behind them, and the grace which the Sender will supply to enable us to bear them. 2. *Positively.* (1) *We must "be in subjection unto the Father of spirits."* (Ver. 9.) This is the opposite of "despising" our troubles. The child of God will school himself into unquestioning submission. He will receive his afflictions as from the Lord, on whose paternal grace he depends for every blessing. (2) *We must be "exercised thereby."* (Ver. 11.) This is the opposite of "fainting" when God reproves us. Chastisement is intended to brace the believer, not to depress him. Afflictions are the gymnastics of the spiritual life. They are like the exercises of the athlete, who is in training for a contest. We are "exercised thereby" when we accept our troubles as sent by God himself for our correction; and when, recognizing this, we co-operate with him in carrying out their gracious purpose.

IV. OUR CONSOLATION UNDER CHASTISEMENT. This passage suggests many comforting thoughts, which should help us submissively to bear it. It is: 1. *Appointed by God.* (Ver. 5.) Afflictions do not come casually. They do not overtake us merely at the pleasure of our enemies. He who chasteneth is "the Lord," the Sovereign of all. Let us, with Job (Job i. 21) and Eli (1 Sam. iii. 18), realize this: to do so will strengthen our hearts. 2. *Sent in fatherly love.* This thought runs through the passage like a golden thread (vers. 5—10). God is "the Father of our spirits;" and he cherishes towards us the heart of a Father. His corrections are a token of his loving-kindness. He loves not to smite; but he smites because he loves. He uses the rod only because necessity requires it. And if a dutiful child submits patiently to the chastisements of his earthly parents, although he has derived only his body from them,

how much more submissively should we bear the Divine corrections, seeing they proceed from him from whom alone we have received our spiritual and immortal nature!

3. *Dealt with unerring wisdom.* (Ver. 10.) We who are parents often chastise our children wrongly. Sometimes our motives are wrong, as when we punish under the influence of temporary passion or caprice. At other times our measures are wrong, as when we choose an infliction of an unsuitable kind, or make it unduly severe. Parents also are prone to study only the temporal well-being of their children, and to chastise them merely with a view to the "few days" of their earthly life. But our heavenly Father makes no mistakes in his chastisements. The pain which he appoints is always wise and right and salutary. He never punishes beyond our deserts, or in excess of what we are able to bear. And he is ever seeking our spiritual and eternal well-being.

4. *Productive and profitable.* (Vers. 10, 11.) The "profit" is that we may share the holiness of God. The "fruit" consists in "righteousness," i.e. moral and spiritual excellence—the beautiful graces and the holy habits of the Christian life. This blessed fruit is "peaceable," in sweet contrast with the "grievousness" of the affliction considered in itself. It begins to be reaped even here on earth (Rom. v. 3—5); and the full harvest of it will be gathered in heaven (Rom. viii. 18; 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18).

Vers. 12—17.—*A threefold cord of duty.* The word "wherefore" (ver. 12) connects this admonition with what goes before. For these reasons, says the apostle—since the Saviour was subjected to such hard treatment at the hands of wicked men; since your own resistance to sin has not yet exposed you to bloodshed; since your very trials are an expression of God's fatherly love; and since his chastisements are fitted to be so profitable in their results—surely you will never allow yourselves to fall away from the Christian faith. The direct admonition in vers. 12—14 refers to ourselves, to our fellow-believers, and to God—an arrangement of thought which is eminently Pauline. And the three parts of it are reduplicated in vers. 15—17, each being introduced with the word "lest."

I. *OUR DUTY TO OURSELVES.* (Vers. 12, 13, 15.) Here the author seems to return to the metaphor of "the race set before us" (ver. 1). "Hands" and "knees" and "feet" represent the powers of action, motion, and progression. The Hebrews must no longer faint in the presence of their trials. They must be resolute, manly, courageous. The exhortation has respect mainly to the spiritual life of each believer himself. Each ought to form a decided purpose to correct his own faults, and to continue faithful at all hazards to his Christian profession. The whole Church should advance in the right course with such unanimity that the highway of holiness shall be beaten smooth by their feet—so smooth that even the "lame" will not stumble in it. If we remain remiss and vacillating, we may finally "fall short of the grace of God" (ver. 15). Slothfulness and indecision cause one to lag behind, and may prevent him from ever reaching the goal. If we be not resolute in our fidelity we shall come short of ultimate salvation, and shall never "see the Lord."

II. *OUR DUTY TO OUR FELLOW-BELIEVERS.* (Vers. 14, 15.) The personal spiritual life which is fed by the Church is in turn to react for good upon the whole congregation. Two prominent duties towards our brethren are here indicated. 1. *To "follow after peace with all."* (Ver. 14.) The scope of the passage seems to restrict this "all" to the members of the Christian brotherhood. We need not expect that God will bless us in our Church relations if we cherish a persistent grudge against any fellow-communicant, resolving never to forget some injury that he may have done us. A vindictive or malignant disposition is not Christian. The soul that harbours malice, and that takes pleasure in exhibiting its animosities, will not only become stunted in its spiritual growth, but will injuriously affect the life of the Church to which it belongs. A prominent cause of ecclesiastical disturbance is the springing up of "any root of bitterness" (ver. 15). Sometimes the noxious weed is a wicked person, like Achan, who "troubled" Israel (Joab. vii. 25); and sometimes a radically bad principle, the growth of which may defile the Church with dissension. In either case, it must be rooted up and cast out. 2. *To have a brotherly care over all.* This thought underlies the entire passage. Each of us by his own example is to help the weak of the flock to become strong; and to set a guard upon the "lame," so that they may not wander out of the right way. While the cure of souls is, of course, the especial duty of the

spiritual rulers of the Church, the expression, "looking carefully," in ver. 15, reminds us that the ordinary members also ought to exercise the office of a bishop over one another. The communion of our Churches would be purer, were this duty of mutual spiritual care more clearly understood and better practised than it is. Indeed, we cannot place too much stress on this point, as one main purpose and function of our Church life. No spiritual work is more restful and rewarding, than that which a Christian man does in connection with the particular congregation to which he belongs.

III. OUR DUTY TO OUR GOD. (Vers. 14, 16, 17.) We must be "pure" as well as "peaceable." The peace that we follow after must be "by righteousness;" for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." This is one of the most solemn sayings of the Bible. How short and simple it is; but how pointed and powerful! It falls upon the ear with a sharp sound of authority. It reverberates within the conscience like the echoes of thunder among the hills. God is pure and holy; therefore only the consecrated and sanctified can see him. Sanctification must be "followed after," i.e. pursued earnestly. We must labour to cleanse ourselves from our carnality and impurity by washing in Jesus' blood, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, by the use of the means of grace, and by living always as in the presence of God. Notice what the writer says in particular of the man who strives after this "sanctification."

1. *He will not be a sensualist.* (Ver. 16.) He will not only avoid acts of gross immorality; he will hate every filthy thought. How dreadful for any one to sit down at the Lord's table, as a professed disciple of Christ, who is in the habit of visiting also the disgusting haunts of secret vice! 2. *Neither will he be a "profane person."* (Vers. 16, 17.) "Profane" means common, secular, worldly; and such a person loves only the things of sense and time, and has no appreciation of what is spiritual. Esau was such a man. He cared nothing for the blessings of the covenant, or for the hopes which centred in the promised seed of Abraham. Hence his guilty folly in bartering away his birthright for a mess of lentils. The apostle, in one or two forcible expressions, depicts the consequences of this act of profanity. All Esau's subsequent regrets were unavailing. On the second occasion, when his younger brother circumvented him, his father Isaac refused to recall the blessing which he had just pronounced; for Isaac realized that in blessing Jacob he had unwittingly been the mouthpiece of a Divine oracle. Esau, therefore, was in this matter God-rejected. He failed to induce his father to change his mind. And he found no means of undoing his own first act of folly. "Now," says the apostle in effect to the Hebrew Christians, "beware of profanity like Esau's. You belong to God's 'firstborn' nation; and the gospel of the Lord Jesus is for 'the Jew first.' Take care that you do not forfeit your rights of spiritual primogeniture. Should you forsake the new and final covenant, for any consideration whatever, you will make as bad a bargain as Esau did."

CONCLUSION. Esau's character and life are a beacon still, to warn us also back from the whirlpool of apostasy. He was a man of a very ordinary type. There are many such all around, who for the savoury meat of sensuous pleasure will barter away their birthright of spiritual opportunity, and at last irrevocably sell their souls. May Divine grace preserve us from cultivating the character of which these words are an adequate epitome—"A profane person, who for one mess of meat sold his own birthright"!

Vers. 18—24.—*Sinai and Zion.* This grand passage, extending to the end of the chapter, forms a magnificent *finale* to the lengthened general exhortation to constancy, beginning at ch. x. 19, which occupies so important a place in the Epistle. The verses before us exhibit a highly wrought and impressive contrast between the Mosaic and the Christian dispensations. Mount Sinai is the emblem of the one, Mount Zion of the other. And Zion is incomparably superior to Sinai, in the privileges and blessings which flow from it.

I. A PICTURE OF THE OLD REVELATION AT SINAI. (Vers. 18—21.) The nature of the dispensation inaugurated there was reflected in the character of the scene on occasion of the giving of the Law. The old economy was: 1. *Sensuous.* Sinai was "a mount that might be touched" (ver. 18); i.e. a tangible, palpable, physical mountain. The expression suggests the ceremonialism which was so prominent a feature of the Mosaic dispensation. The scene at Sinai was spectacular; and Judaism, in like manner, was a religion of externals. Its teaching was elemental, because elementary.

Its ritual was sensuous. Its precepts were sustained by earthly sanctions. 2. *Obscure*. When God came down upon Sinai, he made "blackness and darkness" his pavilion; he revealed himself in flame and storm. This is an emblem of the clouded character of the Old Testament revelation. Under it the plan of redemption still remained veiled in mystery. "The way into the holy place was not yet made manifest" (ch. ix. 8). The Jews, in their ignorance and weakness, could only bear a shaded, shadowy, portentous manifestation of truth. 3. *Exclusive*. God spoke at Horeb only to one small nation, gathered before him there on the plain, and separated by the rocks and passes of the desert from the great peoples of the world. The Jews were a little flock, and the Shepherd of Israel shut them into a little fold by themselves. 4. *Remote*. The Hebrews dared not approach the God who revealed himself to them. The mountain was fenced round, and the stern penalty of death was threatened upon the trespasser (ver. 20). Similarly, while the Mosaic economy granted a certain access to God, and Israel was "a people near unto him," this access was yet not the most real. For Jehovah, to the mind of the Jew, was clothed with thunder; legal barriers stood between him and sinful men; and the Levitical system was saturated with ceremonial restrictions. Moses could not be an adequate mediator for Israel, to bring them to God; at the giving of the Law he was himself smitten with fear and trembling (ver. 21). 5. *Terrible*. This is the most prominent feature of the whole picture. At Sinai the lightnings flashed and the thunder rolled; the trump of God sent forth its wild weird blasts, and the awful voice of the Eternal spoke the ten "words" (ver. 19). But the people could not endure the revelation. They crouched and covered in terror.

"When God of old came down from heaven,
In power and wrath he came;
Before his feet the clouds were riven,
Half darkness and half flame.

"Around the trembling mountain's base
The prostrate people lay;
A day of wrath, and not of grace;
A dim and dreadful day."

(Keble.)

Now, this awful scene symbolized the spirit and genius of the old dispensation. The Law inspired terror. It was "the ministration of death" and of "condemnation." It "bore children unto bondage." The ceremonial system became an unbearable yoke, by reason of its burdensome constraints; while the moral law pronounced its pitiless curses upon the disobedient. 6. *Temporary*. Sinai rears its shaggy cliffs of granite in the naked wilderness, and Israel made only a year's encampment there. The tented plain of the desert was not their home. And so the dispensation set up at Mount Sinai was provisional and preparatory. It was only to stand until, under the Divine leading, the Church should be brought to the spiritual Mount Zion, and to the heavenly Jerusalem as its "city of habitation."

II. A CONTRASTED PICTURE OF THE NEW REVELATION AT ZION. (Vers. 22—24.) Although we did not attempt to trace the various points of comparison in detail, we should yet be impressed with the contrast as seen in the large outlines of the two pictures, and in their general tone and colour. The new economy, as represented by Mount Zion, is: 1. *Spiritual*. The Church of Jesus Christ is the ideal Zion. It is also "the heavenly Jerusalem," the metropolis of the mediatorial kingdom. The New Testament system of religion is inward, supersensible, experimental. The types and ceremonies of Sinai have passed away. The matter of the new revelation is more spiritual. Christianity speaks of righteousness, not of ritual. The gospel laws are written upon the heart. 2. *Clear*. No night, or cloud, or storm gathers around Mount Zion; its very name means "sunny." The Sun of righteousness shines upon its towers and palaces, gilding them with brightness and beauty. The new covenant is "clear as the sun" in its teachings. It has given the world the most advanced truth; and it presents that truth in the simplest and the most explicit form. 3. *All-embracing*. Mount Sinai stands in the lonely and silent desert; but Mount Zion is the centre of a populous city, whose teeming inhabitants are cosmopolitans. The Jewish Church

was shut out from intercourse with the rest of the world; but our fellow-citizens under the new covenant are: (1) *The holy angels*: "myriads of angels, a festal assembly" (vers. 22, 23);—the cherubim and seraphim, all the princes, potentates and rulers of the celestial hierarchy. (2) *The saints on earth*: the "Church of the Firstborn who are enrolled in" the album of heaven. Israel was mustered and numbered at Sinai; and so the New Testament Church, although dispersed all over the world, forms but one society of firstborn ones, each of whom is a prince of the blood of God. (3) *The believers of the ancient Church*: "the spirits of just men made perfect." The disembodied souls of the Old Testament saints could not be made perfect "apart from us" (ch. xi. 40); and thus we now form one brotherhood with them, as well as with departed believers who lived in Christian times. 4. *Access-giving*. At Sinai "the people stood afar off." They could not draw near to God. The presence of his attending angels brought them no confidence. The mediation of Moses could not remove the barrier of their guilt. But now the great invitation is, "Come." The sum of gospel privilege is expressed in the words, "Ye are come" (ver. 22). Believers have been admitted to the mount and city of God, to the companionship of his angels, to the fellowship of his redeemed saints, and into his very presence as the righteous "Judge, the God of all." And to what are we indebted for this access? We have come to God, because we have come "to Jesus," and have been sprinkled with his "blood" (ver. 24). Christ and his blood are the ground of all our blessings, and the sum of all. The nail-pierced hand of a better Mediator than Moses has opened for us the door of access. 5. *Genial*. The scene at Sinai was terrific; but all is peaceful in the sunny garden-city of Zion. It is true that the punishments connected with the new dispensation are far more dreadful than the merely spectacular terrors of the old; but these occupy the background of the picture, while at Sinai the terrors were in the foreground. And all who really come "to the blood of sprinkling" are safe. The atmosphere of the new covenant is balmy and genial by reason of the merit of that blood. Abel spoke (ch. xi. 4) by his sacrifice only of a coming atonement and a future redemption; but Christ's blood certifies that these blessings have been secured. And so the whole panorama of Zion is genial and attractive. Its verdure is unfading (Ps. lxxii. 6); all is winsome and gladsome and serene. 6. *Final*. "The heavenly Jerusalem" is "the city which hath the foundations" (ch. xi. 10). The life of the Church now is no longer a tent-life. It has exchanged the tabernacle for the true temple. The covenant of which Jesus is the Mediator is a "new," *i.e.* (according to the Greek in ver. 24) a *fresh* covenant, one that shall never become stale or old. The kingdom of heaven is a "kingdom that cannot be shaken" (ver. 28). As this whole picture embraces the entire history of the Christian Church, its truthfulness will be more and more appreciated as the centuries roll on, and most of all in the times of the latter-day glory.

CONCLUSION. The practical improvement of this graphic and pregnant passage is indicated in the solemn verses which follow.

Vers. 25—29.—*The final appeal*. The body of the Epistle seems to conclude with these verses, ch. xiii. being of the nature of a postscript. The solemn warning which they utter breaks forth abruptly. It drops like a thunderbolt out of the sunny sky of Zion.

I. OUR NEW TESTAMENT PRIVILEGES. 1. *God speaks to us from heaven*. (Ver. 25.) At Sinai, and while the Jewish dispensation lasted, God spoke as it were "on earth," by an earthly mediator, Moses; and largely by means of material forms, which were only "copies" (ch. ix. 23) of the great spiritual realities. But now God speaks "from heaven,"—from his home at the heart of the universe, and therefore from the heart of truth; and by his Son, the Divine Mediator, who is "in the bosom of the Father." The whole Epistle is clasped together with the emphatic declaration—in its opening sentence (ch. i. 2), and here at its close—that the Lord Jesus is the Prophet of the new covenant. 2. *God has removed the things that were shaken*. (Vers. 28, 27.) It was only "the earth" that shook at Sinai. And that convulsion speedily subsided. Indeed, the Jews became lulled into the delusion that the Levitical institutions would never be overthrown. But Haggai predicted (Hag. ii. 6, 7) that the shaking which was to accompany the introduction of Christianity would affect "the heavens, and the earth,

and the sea, and the dry land, and all nations." It would do greatly more than produce alteration in the outer form and state of the Church. It would grasp its very heart and life—flooding it with the noonday light of spiritual truth, and with the abundant grace of the Holy Ghost. The movables of Judaism, which had been "made" at Sinai—the tabernacle, the priesthood, the ritual, the sacrifices, the festivals, etc.—were "shaken" and "removed" when the Church "came" to Zion. Judaism was only a scaffolding, set up temporarily with a view to the erection of the permanent structure of Christianity. Its ceremonial was the mere husk of religion; and when the husk rotted and perished, the kernel still lived and became fruitful. 8. *God has given us a kingdom that cannot be shaken.* (Ver. 28.) Believers in Christ "receive" the kingdom of heaven; they are not only subjects in it, but kings. And this kingdom is the finished work of God—the Divine masterpiece. Everything connected with it is stable. Nothing that is loose or perishable can adhere to it. It is built upon those great facts and truths which the convulsions that overturned the Levitical system could not disturb. The "things which are not shaken remain;" e.g. the character of God, the moral nature and responsibility of man, the dark fact of human guilt, the doctrine of acceptance by sacrifice. Christianity has solved the problem of sin, in relation to the life of man; and therefore it "cannot be shaken." Throughout all time the way of salvation, the encouragements to believe, the rule of duty, the principles of the Christian life, the fruits of holiness (1 Cor. xiii. 8, 13), will be the same. And what a joy to live, as we do, among these abiding realities! The kingdoms of the world pass away; but Christ's kingdom "shall stand for ever" (Dan. ii. 37—45). Systems of philosophy cease to be; but the truth as it is in Jesus endures. Denominations disappear; but the Church continues. Political establishments of religion are shaken; but national religion remains. Creeds decay and wax old; but the Bible possesses an indestructible vitality. The heavens and the earth shall pass away; but the kingdom of the saints cannot be moved.

II. THE RESPONSIBILITIES WHICH THESE PRIVILEGES INVOLVE. We must: 1. *Obey the voice of God.* (Ver. 25.) That voice speaks to us in the Scriptures, and in the pleadings of the Holy Spirit within our souls. But in our time earth is "so full of dreary noises" that our weak hearts are sorely tempted not to listen to the words of God. There is the voice of the philosophic thinker, of the political leader, of the social reformer, of the scientific teacher, of the newspaper editor, of the popular novelist. But none of these voices are prophetic. The man who can speak with authority regarding some department of physical science is not on that account entitled to deference when he discourses about God and the future life. Only the Lord Jesus Christ, the Logos, by whom God now speaks from heaven, can instruct us concerning the spiritual universe and the way of salvation. 2. *Cherish gratitude for the kingdom.* (Ver. 28.) "Let us have grace," i.e. gratitude. To cultivate the spirit of thankfulness is the very essence and sum of Christian duty. When God in his mercy invests us with the kingdom, what can we say, but just "Many thanks"? "I will take the cup of salvation;" "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable Gift." 3. *Devote our lives to the service of God.* (Ver. 28.) For, while the saint is a king, he is at the same time a servant; indeed, he is a servant because he is a king. The service is involved in the kingdom. The entire life of the Christian is to be that career of devout consecration which is the natural outcome of the grace of gratitude. And, while thankfulness is the secret motive of the service, its befitting spirit is "reverence and awe." The believer's manner and tone are not to be flippant or frivolous; but grave, chastened, solemn.

III. WARNINGS BY WHICH THESE RESPONSIBILITIES ARE ENFORCED. This passage is an earnest admonition. It opens with an arresting "Beware" (ver. 25); and it sounds three notes of warning. 1. *From Hebrew history.* (Ver. 25.) When God spoke by Moses and the prophets, "his people would not hearken to his voice;" and thus they were constantly drawing down punishment upon themselves. If, then, they escaped not who spurned the less adequate revelation made by the heaven-descended God, how may we hope to escape, if we turn away from the full-orbed revelation made by the heaven-ascended Son of God? 2. *From Hebrew prophecy.* (Vers. 26, 27.) God has no other "Yet once more" to promise to the world. That was to be the last "shaking" of the Church which should accompany the introduction of the gospel. "It is the

last hour" (1 John ii. 18). The final overthrow of types and forms is proceeding. God has done all for us that he can do. He has given us the "eternal gospel." To reject it were to attach ourselves only to the passing and perishing. 3. *From Hebrew theology.* (Ver. 29.) The words of this verse fitly close the prolonged strain of exhortation. They are borrowed from Deut. iv. 24; and the apostle, in citing that passage here, reminds us that the Divine character is not one of "those things that are shaken." If the God who spoke at Sinai was just and severe, the God who dwells in Zion is not less so. For the very reason that God is gentleness and love and mercy, he must be "a consuming fire" to all who are essentially alien to him. Sometimes, when this warning word is quoted, it is softened after this fashion: "*Out of Christ* God is a consuming fire." But such a gloss is unwarrantable. For God is never out of Christ. Christ is the manifested God. It is not so that God the Father is all justice and severity, and God the Son all tenderness and grace. Christ the Redeemer is "a consuming fire." The most dreadful declarations about the doom of the impenitent which the Bible contains were made by him.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The Christian race.* "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so," etc. The "wherefore" shows the connection of our text with the preceding chapter. There the writer has exhibited the power of faith in a host of illustrious examples. To the exercise of a like faith in the prosecution of the Christian race he now summons the Hebrew Christians.

I. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS HERE COMPARED TO A RACE. The Christian is represented as a runner competing for the prize; and the writer would arouse him to activity and perseverance by the example of those who have already triumphed, and are now bearing silent but eloquent testimony to the power of faith. The comparison of the Christian life to a race is appropriate and suggestive. 1. *A race has its limitations, so has the Christian life.* The racer may not run anywhere, but must pursue the course marked out for him. Beginning at the starting-point, he must pursue the definite course until he reach the goal. And in the Christian life "the race is set before us;" it is marked out by the Word of God, by the examples of the faithful who have finished their course, and we may ascertain it with unerring accuracy by marking the foot-prints of Jesus the great Leader and Perfecter of faith. 2. *A race is characterized by intense activities, so is the Christian life.* There is no room for sloth or indifference. The Divine life can be maintained only by constant diligence and strenuous effort; and it can be perfected only through conflict and suffering. Our progress in the Christian course is opposed by strong and subtle adversaries, and frequent and formidable difficulties. We have to battle with our foes and grapple with our difficulties, even while running the race that is set before us. 3. *A race is characterized by brevity, so is the Christian life upon earth.* The race we are running requires intense effort, but only for a short season; the goal will very soon be reached. The whole of our earthly life is but of short duration; and the time of this earnest race is still shorter. What is our life here to eternity? What is the period of effort on the course to the age of rest and reward?

II. COMPLIANCE WITH CERTAIN CONDITIONS IS INDISPENSABLE TO SUCCESS IN THIS RACE. 1. *We must "lay aside every weight"—cast off everything that encumbers.* The reference here is to things which in themselves are not positively sinful, customs and associations which in themselves are innocent, but which may wrap themselves tightly round our heart and impede our progress. "Intercourse and friendship," says Ebrard, "with old Jewish acquaintances, the relations formed by trade and merchandise, might be hindrances of this kind for the readers, and in such a case it was right, and is still right, to break entirely away from such relations, and to get rid of the fetters which they impose as soon as they threaten to become a snare, even though in themselves they should be innocent." Everything that would hinder us in running this race, every weight of cares, of interests, of attachments to the things pertaining only to this life, of relationships which are not favourable to advancement in the race, must be given up, abandoned. 2. *We must "lay aside the sin which doth so easily beset us," or, "the sin which subtly encircles us."* With every one of us there is some sin to which we are especially prone;

let us each take heed that we are not hindered in the race by reason of it. There is some weak point in the moral defences of our nature where the tempter most easily obtains access; to this point, wherever it may be, special attention must be directed. With some it is an ungovernable temper; with others, a strong propensity to avarice; with others, etc. Let every man, by faithful self-examination and by prayer, ascertain his own besetting sin, and seek to be quite free from it. 8. *We must run our race with patience.* Not simply with patient endurance of the trials which may befall the runner, but with perseverance until the goal is reached. "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong," but "he that endureth to the end the same shall be saved." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." It is only "by patient continuance in well-doing" that "glory and honour and immortality" are won.

III. IN THE PROSECUTION OF THIS RACE WE ARE SURROUNDED BY A GREAT HOST OF WITNESSES, OR TESTIFIERS. "We are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." Those who have preceded us in the life of faith in immense numbers surround us as witnesses to the power of faith, as testifiers by their example to the might of that principle by which we are called to run our course successfully, and war our warfare nobly, and do our life-work faithfully. The writer would teach us to think often of this great cloud of witnesses, to meditate upon the noble lives and glorious deeds of the true men who have gone before us, that by the remembrance of their trials and triumphs we may arouse ourselves to greater diligence in running the race that is set before us. In them we see what trials can be borne, what victories won, what work accomplished, what characters built up, by faith. If by faith they overcame every difficulty, why should we be discouraged by the difficulties of our course? If by faith they conquered their many and mighty enemies, why should we dread to encounter our foes? If by faith, despite outward opposition and inner weakness, they came off victors in the fight and winners in the race, why should we despond and shrink from the contest? "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses," etc.

IV. IN THE PROSECUTION OF THIS RACE WE ARE SUSTAINED AND ANIMATED BY THE HIGHEST EXAMPLE—THE PERFECT EXAMPLE. "Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith," etc. The idea of the writer is not that Jesus Christ is the Producer of faith in us and the Completer of the faith which he has organized. If we translate, "Looking unto the Leader and Perfecter of the faith, even Jesus," we shall perhaps the more readily apprehend the meaning of the text. In the long procession of heroes celebrated for their faith our Lord stands at the head; he is the Leader, and in him faith appears in full and perfected glory. And the text exhorts us to look to him as our great Exemplar, and to draw from him support and encouragement. The example of our Saviour is especially sustaining and cheering, for the course he had to run was one of extreme difficulty and danger and suffering; yet he overcame, and finished his course with joy, and gained the highest honours. "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross," etc. (cf. ch. i. 8; ii. 9, 10). In time of suffering, then, pursue your course "looking unto Jesus," the perfect Example of patience; and in the presence of Gethsemane and Calvary your sufferings will appear slight, and the calm face of the supreme Sufferer will impart patience and power unto you. In seasons of despondency, when faith is weak and your spirit sinks within you, look unto Jesus, and the trust which he exercised and the destiny he attained, and let the bright example brace your heart with courage. In times of exhaustion and weariness, when you faint because of the duties and difficulties of the way, look up to Jesus, and his example will raise and strengthen your powerless hands, and nerve your whole frame with new energy. And in seasons of temptation look unto him who "resisted unto blood, striving against sin," and yield not in the conflict, give no place to the tempter. Let this be our attitude, "looking unto Jesus." Let the eye of the soul be fixed upon him as our Pattern and Helper; so shall we finish our course with joy, and "receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away."—W. J.

Ver. 3.—*The Christian's danger of weariness and his defence.* "For consider him that endured such contradiction," etc. Our subject naturally divides itself into two branches.

I. THE EVIL TO BE GUARDED AGAINST. "Lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." The Christian is in danger of weariness in the course which he is called to run. This weariness springs from faintness of soul. When the heart loses its faith and hope and enthusiasm, the step soon loses its elasticity and vigour and speed. And this may arise: 1. *From the difficulties of the course.* The path of the Christian is not always through green pastures or beside still waters. It is often bleak and rugged, and mountainous. It is marked by trials of various kinds, which sorely strain his faith and patience and fortitude. And there are enemies who would delay his progress sometimes by subtle solicitations to ease and enjoyment, and at other times by opposing his efforts or obstructing his way. "And the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way." 2. *From the slowness of the apparent progress.* There are times when the Christian runner seems to make little or no advancement in the race. Notwithstanding reading and meditation, aspiration and resolution, prayer and effort, we are still so hampered by imperfections and sins, so deficient in holiness and usefulness, and so little like our Lord, that at times all that we desire and do seems to be vain, and our souls wax faint within us. 3. *From a false or exaggerated estimate of the value of feeling in the Christian life.* There are those who are prone to test their spiritual condition and progress by the state of their feelings. If their emotions are tender and confiding and cheerful, they conclude that they are in the true course and moving onward to the goal; but if their hearts seem unfeeling, or cold, or cheerless, they doubt whether they are in the course at all, or ever started aright in the race, and so they faint in their souls and flag in their footsteps. Feelings fluctuate; they ebb and flow; they rise and fall. But we run this race, not by feeling, but by faith. We are saved, not by our emotions, however delightful they may be, but by our confidence in our Lord and Saviour. 4. *From neglect of the means by which hope and courage are maintained.* If prayer be neglected; if meditation upon the spiritual and eternal, upon the soul and truth and God, cease; if the testimony of the "great cloud of witnesses" be unregarded; if "the Leader and Perfecter of the faith" be not contemplated,—the soul will faint and the limbs become weary, and the attainment of the prize will be jeopardized. How, then, is the evil to be guarded against?

II. THE SAFEGUARD AGAINST THIS EVIL. "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself," etc. The meaning of the word rendered "consider" is not easily expressed in English. *Analogize*, compare, think on him and on his sufferings by way of comparison with ours. The "contradiction of sinners" should not be confined to words, but indicates the opposition of the wicked against him. A comparison of what he thus suffered and the trials we have to bear will preserve the soul from faintness, and the steps from faltering. 1. *He suffered more than his followers are called to suffer.* He was assailed by slander, by contradictions, by ensnaring questions. He was betrayed by one disciple, denied by another, and forsaken by all in the time of his trial. He was blasphemed, scourged, derided, and crucified. Think, moreover, how intensely susceptible to suffering he must have been, since he was untainted in his body and perfectly holy in his soul. 2. *Yet his sufferings did not cause him to falter in his course, or to turn aside from it.* Resolutely he went forward on his path of suffering and sacrifice; knowing the shame and anguish that awaited him, yet still he steadfastly pursued his appointed way—

"Until the perfect work was done,
And drunk the bitter cup of gall."

3. *In this he is an Example to us.* "If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example," etc. (1 Pet. ii. 20—23). Consideration of him and of his sufferings makes our severest sufferings seem small, and saves us from weariness and discouragement in the Christian course.

"Lord, should my path through suffering lie,
Forbid it I should e'er repine;
Still let me turn to Calvary,
Nor heed my griefs, remembering thine."
(Conder.)

W. J.

Vers. 5, 6.—*Divine discipline.* "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord," etc. Our subject is Divine discipline. Let us notice—

I. ITS CHARACTER. Three words are used to express it—"rebuke," "chastening," "scourging." The last two seem to be used synonymously here. Archbishop Trench points out that "'to rebuke' and 'to chasten' are often found together, but they are very capable of being distinguished. 'To rebuke' is so to rebuke that the person is brought to the acknowledgment of his fault—is *convinced*, as David was when rebuked by Nathan (2 Sam. xii. 13)." The word translated to "chasten," "being in classical Greek to instruct, to educate, is in sacred Greek to instruct or educate *by means of correction*, through the severe discipline of love."¹ The object of the discipline is to deliver the subjects of it from sin, to establish them in the faith, and to perfect them in holiness. The means of the discipline are afflictions, persecutions, and trials. And it may be administered by the enemies of the Church of Christ. The persecutions of man may be the discipline of God. "Persecution for religion is sometimes a correction and rebuke for the sins of professors of religion. Men persecute them because they are religious; God chastises them because they are not more so: men persecute them because they will not give up their profession; God chastises them because they have not lived up to their profession."

II. ITS AUTHOR. "The chastening of the Lord. . . . Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." Some of our trials are from his hand. He is the great Husbandman, and he prunes the vines that they may bring forth more fruit. The trials which are not sent by him are permitted by him (cf. Job i. 12; ii. 6; 2 Cor. xii. 7). And he gives to all our trials their disciplinary character. He makes the bitter potion medicinal. By his blessing our sufferings become salutary, and our sorest afflictions our sagest instructors. The fact that the Lord is the Author of our discipline, that our trials either proceed from him or are permitted and regulated by him, supplies a guarantee that we shall not be tried beyond our strength. He is infinite in wisdom and in love. "He knoweth our frame;" and he will either restrict our trials so that they exceed not our strength, or increase our strength until it surpasses the severity of our trials. "He stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind." "I will correct thee in measure." "Though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies." "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

III. ITS SUBJECTS. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." 1. *They are filially related to him.* "Every son" of his he subjects to reproof and chastisement. "God has one Son without sin, but none without suffering." If we are his sons, we may rest assured that he will not fail to secure to us the discipline that we need. Thus our sufferings may be an evidence of our sonship. 2. *They are beloved by him.* "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." Because he loves us he corrects us. It has been well said, that "lawns which we would keep in the best condition are very frequently mown; the grass has scarcely any respite from the scythe. Out in the meadows there is no such repeated cutting; they are mown but once or twice in the year. Even thus the nearer we are to God, and the more regard he has for us, the more frequent will be our adversities. To be very dear to God involves no small degree of chastisement."

IV. ITS RECEPTION. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord," etc. 1. *It should not be deemed unimportant.* "Regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord." "We may be said to despise the chastening of the Lord," says Dr. Wardlaw, "in the following cases: (1) When it is *not felt*; when there is a want of natural sensibility to the particular stroke of the rod. This is but rare. Men in general are quite sufficiently alive to the value of temporal things. But the value is comparative. There are cherished and favourite possessions, and others less highly thought of, less fondly held. The Lord, it may be, deals gently. He spares the 'gourd.' He does not take what is most highly set by. And instead of humbly owning the kindness—being lowly and submissive, and seeking a blessing on the gentle stroke, that the heavier one may be withheld—the preservation and safety of the greater produces insensibility to the privation of the less; and the correction is thus disregarded, and proves inefficient. (2) When it is not duly felt *as from God*. (3) When, although God is seen in it and

¹ 'Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Churches in Asia.'

his hand is felt, it is not felt *humbly and submissively; not bowed to, but resisted.* (4) When the *design* or *end* of correction is not laid to heart." 2. *It should not be deemed intolerable.* "Nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." We are not to sink under the reproofs and strokes of the Divine discipline, though they be severe. The fact that our trials are regulated by our Father's hand, that they are educational, that they are intended and adapted to promote our spiritual and eternal well-being, should keep us from sinking beneath their pressure.

"The tears we shed are not in vain;
Nor worthless is the heavy strife;
If, like the buried seed of grain,
They rise to renovated life.
It is through tears our spirits grow;
'Tis in the tempest souls expand,
If it but teaches us to go
To him who holds it in his hand.
Oh, welcome, then, the stormy blast!
Oh, welcome, then, the ocean's roar!
Ye only drive more sure and fast
Our trembling bark to heaven's bright shore."

(T. C. Upham.)

W. J.

Ver. 11.—*Discipline in its endurance and in its results.* "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous," etc. Two aspects of discipline, distinct yet vitally related, are here set before us.

I. *DISCIPLINE IN ITS ENDURANCE.* "All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous, but grievous." All life's discipline, while we are enduring it, is painful. It is so even to sincere and saintly Christians, for: 1. *The Christian is not insensible to pain.* Christianity offers no encouragement to stoicism. It does not call upon us to repress or to blunt the natural susceptibilities of our nature. We are summoned in the Christian Scriptures to feel for others and with others. "Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep." Insensibility is neither manly nor saintly, virtuous nor blessed. Our Saviour was deeply moved by the afflictions and griefs of others (cf. Mark vii. 34; viii. 2; Luke xix. 41; John xi. 33, 35, 38). And he felt acutely the sorrows and sufferings which fell to his own lot (John xii. 27; Matt. xxvi. 38; Luke xxii. 44; Matt. xxvii. 46; ch. v. 7, 8). 2. *Pain or trial is an essential element of discipline.* Our text speaks of discipline as "chastening," and that is painful. If we speak of it as correction, that is not easy to bear. It may be administered in various forms, but in every form it carries with it trial or suffering of some kind. Take away the trying element from the experience, and you take from it the character of discipline. 3. *The endurance of discipline demands the strenuous exercise of spiritual powers.* The writer speaks of those who have been exercised by the chastening. This exercise is not an amusement, but an arduous putting forth of mental and moral powers. Suffering sorely tests our submission to the Divine will. Tribulation tries our patience and piety. Enigmas of providence and dark passages in our own experience test our faith in the Divine Father. Remember how God's servant Job was "exercised." And St. Paul (2 Cor. iv. 8—12; xi. 23—30; xii. 7, 8). And the Christians in Smyrna (Rev. ii. 9, 10). If we did not feel the pain of the discipline, we could not derive any profit from it. If the chastening were not grievous for the present, it could not result in any blessing hereafter.

II. *DISCIPLINE IN ITS FRUIT.* "Yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness." It is a well-attested fact of human experience that trial borne in a right spirit, and sanctified by God, results in rich benefits. But notice: 1. *The condition of the fruit of discipline.* "It yieldeth fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby." The chastening must have been felt, and recognized and accepted as discipline, in order to the reception of its fruits. Suffering is the condition of the deepest serenity. The pain of moral conflict must precede the glory of moral conquest. 2. *The season of the fruit of discipline.* "Afterward it yieldeth," etc. Not while we are passing through the painful experiences

do we reap the rich result of them, but "afterward." Time is required for the fruit to form and to ripen. There are beautiful pictures which cannot be truly seen when we are near to them. So viewed, they appear to be inartistic and rough daubs. But, viewed from the right angle and from a suitable distance, their beauty captivates the eye and delights the soul. We must leave our disciplinary experiences and travel into the "afterward," before we can discover their true significance and their gracious uses. 8. *The character of the fruit of discipline.* (1) The fruit of righteousness. Alford: "The practical righteousness which springs from faith." "Before I was afflicted I went astray," etc. (Ps. cxix. 67, 71). (2) The fruit of peace. "Peaceable fruit." Alford: "This fruit is called peaceable in contrast to the conflict by which it is won." Ebrard: "Exercise in hard bitter conflict brings peace as its fruit." Tholuck: "Fruit of righteousness to be enjoyed in peace after the conflict." Generally the deepest and most constant peace is possessed by those who have passed through the sharpest sufferings or the severest struggles. "Our afflictions are not for naught. They are the fruitful seed of future glories. They are blessings in disguise. They are meant for good, and are productive of good. They are like the early processes of the garden, when the soil is broken up and weeded, in order that fair flowers may at length adorn it. They are the quarrying and chiselling of the marble before the living statue can stand out in symmetrical proportions. They are the instruments, without which no harmony can be secured in the ultimate concert. They are the medicine of our convalescence, the drudgery of our education, the spring pruning of our vine trees, without which we can never be healthy or happy, fit for heaven, or qualified to bring forth fruit whereby our Father may be glorified."

In conclusion, our subject should encourage us to be: 1. *Patient under our discipline.* Discipline is like a tree; it requires time and seasonable influences to produce the ripened fruit of peace and righteousness. Wait patiently for the "hereafter." "Behold, the husbandman waiteth," etc. (Jas. v. 7). 2. *Resigned under our discipline.* Let us not rebel against the suffering which is designed for our sanctification; but let us "be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live." 3. *Hopeful under our discipline.* The trial may be bitter, but it will be brief, and the fruit thereof will be blessed and eternal (cf. Rom. viii. 18; 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18).—W. J.

Vers. 12, 13.—*The Christian treatment of the feeble.* "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down," etc.

I. *THE LIABILITY TO FAINTNESS AND INFIRMITY IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.* This condition is variously described in the text. "The hands which hang down," relaxed, enervated, incapable of vigorous or healthy action. "The feeble knees," tottering and paralyzed. "That which is lame" indicates, says Alford, "that part of the Church which was wavering between Christianity and Judaism." Christians are often faint and feeble in our own times. Piety may be sincere yet deficient in strength. A genuine Christian may suffer with lameness in some element of his character or some faculty of service. This feebleness may arise: 1. *From the discipline to which we are subjected.* We may faint when we are corrected by him (ver. 5). The first effect of discipline may be to discourage us, and this will probably lead to lack of earnestness and vigour in Christian life and service. Discipline misunderstood or resented may disable us for a time. 2. *From the difficulties of our course.*¹ 3. *From the neglect of the means by which hope and effort are sustained.*¹

II. *THE DANGER ARISING FROM FAINTNESS AND INFIRMITY IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.* 1. *Cessation of Christian effort.* Relaxed hands and tottering knees may cause the Christian runner to give up running, and to relapse into ignoble ease. Instead of imitating Gideon's heroic three hundred who were "faint, yet pursuing" their fleeing foes, the feeble may relinquish the pursuit altogether. Thus faintness may lead to failure. 2. *Deviation from the Christian course.* If the way be very rugged and tedious, requiring painful effort to walk in it, those who are lame may be turned out of it. The Christian race is easy when the runners are strong and the course is smooth. But oh, it is very difficult when the hearts are heavy, and the hands nerveless, and the limbs are lamed, and the way is rough and steep! Under such conditions it requires

¹ See these points more fully stated in our homily on ver. 8.

no little patience and heroism to keep moving onwards even at any pace; and the temptation to turn aside is very great.

III. THE DUTY TO BE PURSUED IN FAINTNESS AND INFIRMITY IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 1. *To seek renewal of strength.* "Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." How shall we do this? (1) By believing prayer to God. "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength," etc. (Isa. xl. 29—31). (2) By the recollection of former mercies. Memory may be used as an inspiration of hope and courage. "Because thou hast been my Help, therefore under the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." (3) By consideration of the uses and benefits of our trials and discipline (cf. Rom. v. 3—5; Jas. i. 2, 3, 12). (4) By contemplation of the great multitude who have reached the goal and won the prize (cf. ver. 1). (5) By contemplation of "the prize of our high calling." Exercises such as these are calculated to inspire moral courage, and increase spiritual strength, and promote Christian progress. 2. *To seek to keep each other in and help each other onward in the way.* "Make straight paths for your feet, that that which is lame be not turned out of the way, but rather be healed." "The meaning seems to be," says Alford, "let your walk be so firm and so unanimous in the right direction, that a plain track and highway may be thereby established for those who accompany and follow you, to perceive and walk in (cf. Isa. xxxv. 8). If the whole congregation, by their united and consistent walk, trod a plain and beaten path for men's feet, these lame ones, though halting, would be easily able to keep in it, and, by keeping in the 'straight tracks,' would even acquire the habit of walking straight onward, and so be healed; but if the tracks were errant and confused, their erratic steps would deviate more and more, till at length they fell away out of the right way altogether."

CONCLUSION. 1. *Let not the faint yet sincere Christian yield to discouragement.* 2. *Let not the vigorous Christian despise the feeble and halting, but rather cheer and help them.* 3. *Let all Christians in the strength of God press onward to the goal and to the crown.*—W. J.

Ver. 14.—*The pursuit of peace and holiness.* "Follow peace with all men, and holiness," etc. The primary meaning of the text seems to be that the Christians addressed "are to guard against differences among themselves; they are not to quarrel with one another, but every one is to be earnestly intent on his own sanctification;" for without holiness no one shall see the Lord with joy. Three chief points arise for consideration.

I. PEACE AS AN OBJECT OF PURSUIT. "Follow after peace with all men." Peace here is the opposite of strife, division, or misunderstanding amongst Christian brethren. "Seek peace, and pursue it." "Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" etc. (Ps. cxxxiii.). Notice: 1. *The importance of the object of pursuit.* "Peace." It is essential to spiritual progress, to Christian usefulness, and to the enjoyment of the Divine presence. Discord drives away the Holy Spirit, and is fatal to personal growth in grace, to mutual edification, and to successful evangelization. 2. *The extent of this pursuit.* "With all men." The primary meaning is "all their fellow-Christians." The context shows this. Our text immediately follows the exhortation to guard against any feeble Christian being turned out of the way, and it immediately precedes the exhortation to take heed that no one should fall short of the grace of God. And if the "all" signified all mankind, the exhortation under consideration would be exceedingly unconnected. "It is clearly the brethren who are here meant by all," as in Rom. xiv. 19, "Let us follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." But in applying it to ourselves may we not take it in its widest signification? "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." 3. *The limit of this pursuit.* In our endeavours after peace we must not sacrifice anything which is essential to the pursuit of holiness. "First pure, then peaceable." Follow after peace, but not at the expense of Christian principle.

II. HOLINESS AS AN OBJECT OF PURSUIT. "Follow after . . . holiness," or, "sanctification." Delitzsch says, "Sanctification is not holiness, but is the putting on of it and becoming holy." But for popular speech we may use the term "holiness." Let us consider two inquiries. 1. *What is holiness?* It is, says Dr. Huntington, "that

attribute which is the very crown of all the culture of humanity; for it carries the soul up nearest to the everlasting Fountain of wisdom, power, goodness, from which it came. It enters in only where repentance opens the way, and spiritual renewal puts the heart into wholesome relations with the Divine will. It is the peculiar gift for which the world stands indebted to revelation, and it is multiplied just in proportion as the heart is formed into the likeness of Christ's. It is the summit of manhood, but no less the grace of God. It is achieved by effort, because your free will must use the means that secure it; and it is equally the benignant inspiration of that Father who hears every patient petition." 2. *How shall we pursue holiness?* Not by efforts, however sincere and earnest, after self-reformation or self-improvement. It is assumed that the persons who are exhorted to follow after holiness have accepted Christ as their Saviour and Lord. Supposing that we are sincere Christians, we should seek for holiness. (1) By keeping our spiritual nature open to Divine impression and action. We must let Christ enter, and dwell, and work, and reign within us. (2) By communion with Jesus Christ. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise." "We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord," etc. (2 Cor. iii. 18). (3) By conscious and deliberate imitation of Christ. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." "I have given you an example," etc. (John xiii. 15). "Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps." This imitation obviously includes endeavours to render complete and hearty obedience to the Divine will. (4) By diligent use of Divine ordinances. The holy Book will be prayerfully and thoughtfully read, "the assembling of ourselves together" will be welcomed, and the ministry of the Word and the sacraments will be devoutly considered and accepted. (5) This pursuit should be continuous. "It is not by fits and starts that men become holy. It is not occasional, but continuous, prolonged, and lifelong efforts that are required; to be daily at it; always at it; resting but to renew the work; falling but to rise again. It is not by a few rough, spasmodic blows of the hammer that a graceful statue is brought out of the marble block, but by the labour of continuous days, and many delicate touches of the sculptor's chisel. It is not with a rush and a spring that we are to reach Christ's character, attain to perfect saintship; but step by step, foot by foot, hand over hand, we are slowly and often painfully to mount the ladder that rests on earth and rises to heaven" (Dr. Thomas Guthrie). (6) The pursuit both of peace and of holiness should be zealous. The word used by the writer in enjoining it shows this. It means to pursue rapidly, to follow eagerly, to earnestly endeavour to acquire. Half-hearted efforts are of little avail. As the miser seeks to amass temporal wealth, as the enthusiastic student strives after knowledge, so let us follow after peace and holiness. And with even greater eagerness should we pursue them because of their greater importance.

III. HOLINESS AS A QUALIFICATION FOR HEAVEN. "Sanctification, without which no man shall see the Lord." 1. *Heaven is the place of the supreme manifestation of God.* (Cf. Ps. xvi. 11; xvii. 15; 1 John iii. 2; Rev. vii. 15; xxii. 3, 4.) 2. *Holiness is an essential qualification for the perception of this manifestation.* "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." "The pure heart," says Tholuck, "itself is the organ whereby the vision of God becomes attainable by us." Without holiness a person has no more fitness for heaven than a blind man has for the enjoyment of a beautiful picture-gallery or a glorious landscape. 3. *If it were possible for an unholy soul to enter heaven it could find no peace or happiness there, but would realize intense misery.* "Heaven would be hell to an irreligious man. . . . How forlorn would he wander through the courts of heaven! He would find no one like himself; he would see in every direction the marks of God's holiness, and these would make him shudder. He would feel himself always in his presence. He could no longer turn his thoughts another way, as he does now, when conscience reproaches him. He would know that the eternal eye was ever upon him; and that eye of holiness, which is joy and life to holy creatures, would seem to him an eye of wrath and punishment. God cannot change his nature. Holy he must ever be. But while he is holy, no unholy soul can be happy in heaven. Fire does not inflame iron, but it inflames straw. It would cease to be fire if it did not. And so heaven itself would be fire to those who would fain escape across the great gulf from the torments of hell. The finger of Lazarus would but increase their thirst. The very 'heaven that is over their heads' will be

'brass' to them" (Dr. J. H. Newman). Therefore, let us "follow after peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."—W. J.

Vers. 16, 17.—*Esau; or, the sacrifice of the spiritual for the sensuous.* "Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person," etc. There is much about this man, Esau, which is noble and attractive. "Esau, the shaggy, red-haired huntsman, the man of the field, with his arrows, his quiver, and his bow, coming in weary from the chase, caught as with the levity and eagerness of a child by the sight of the lentil soup—'Feed me, I pray thee, with the red, red pottage'—yet so full of generous impulse, so affectionate towards his aged father, so forgiving towards his brother, so open-hearted, so chivalrous, who has not at times felt his heart warm toward the poor rejected Esau, and been tempted to join with him as he cries 'with a great and exceeding bitter cry,' 'Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father!'" (Dr. A. P. Stanley). Yet he is solemnly held up in our text as a beacon against certain sins which might lead to apostasy from the Christian faith and life. In his conduct as mentioned in the text we notice two things.

I. A SACRIFICE OF SACRED RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES FOR SENSUOUS SATISFACTION. "Esau for one mess of meat sold his own birthright" (cf. Gen. xxv. 29—34). Peculiar rights and privileges were inherited by the firstborn son. (1) He received a double portion of the paternal property, which probably signifies twice as much as any other son received (Deut. xxi. 17). (2) The priestly office pertained to him, previous to the selection of the tribe of Levi to fulfil that office for the nation (Numb. viii. 17—19). (3) He enjoyed a rank and authority in the family over those who were younger similar to that exercised by the father (Gen. xxvii. 29; xlix. 3). (4) And in the case before us, the honour of being in the patriarchal line, and of transmitting the promises made to Abraham. These rights of primogeniture Esau sold for one meal of red pottage; and in the sale we have: 1. *A sacrifice of a great and lifelong good for the satisfaction of present need and desire.* Esau was tired, faint for want of food; there was the appetizing pottage; and there was the mean and subtle brother who craved the birthright, and saw his opportunity for gaining his end by disgraceful means, and who proposed that the birthright should be given to him for the mess of pottage, and who, deeming others as unprincipled as himself, would have the bargain ratified by an oath; and Esau yielded, and sacrificed the long future for the brief present. He allowed his strong impulse to overpower his reason and judgment. 2. *A sacrifice of spiritual privileges for sensuous satisfactions.* The cravings of his senses, his hunger and desire for the pottage, mastered the convictions of his soul. Carnal appetite conquered the claims of Esau's higher interests. 3. *A sacrifice made upon the solicitation of his mean and crafty brother.* Most discreditable was the action of Jacob in this transaction. If a darker guilt attaches to the tempter to evil than to him who, being tempted, yields, then Jacob's sin was greater than Esau's. Well does Dean Stanley inquire, "Who does not feel at times his indignation swell against the younger brother? 'Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he hath supplanted me these two times?' He entraps his brother, he deceives his father, he makes a bargain even in his prayer; in his dealings with Laban, in his meeting with Esau, he still calculates and contrives; he distrusts his neighbours, he regards with prudential indifference the insult to his daughter and the cruelty of his sons; he hesitates to receive the assurance of Joseph's good will; he repels, even in his lesser traits, the free confidence that we cannot withhold from the patriarchs of the elder generation." Thus tempted by hunger, by appetite, by opportunity, and by his astute and scheming brother, "Esau for one mess of meat sold his own birthright." "Thus Esau despised his birthright." To what a large extent do men still sin after the fashion of Esau's transgression! In our country there are multitudes who are bartering their spiritual interests for secular prosperity—renouncing godliness for worldly gain. What countless numbers are risking the salvation of their souls for the gratification of their senses! sacrificing their well-being in the endless future for their pleasure in the brief present!

II. A SACRIFICE WHICH INVOLVED IRREPARABLE LOSS. "For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected," etc. We have here: 1. *Earnest desire for the forfeited blessing.* "He would have inherited the blessing." Esau was neither so wicked nor so worldly as to contemn the blessing either

of his father's God or of his father. And when he was defrauded of that blessing by his brother, he sought for it with a most pathetic earnestness (Gen. xxvii. 30—40). 2. *Deep distress because of the loss of the forfeited blessing.* Our text mentions the "tears" of his great sorrow. "He cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father. . . . Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept." 3. *Earnest desire and deep distress which were of no avail for the recovery of the forfeited blessing.* "He was rejected: for he found no place of repentance." We do not understand by this either that Esau was unable to change his father's mind, or that he could not himself repent of his sins; but, as Alford expresses it, "that he found no way open to reverse what had been done: the sin had been committed and the consequence entailed, irrevocably. He might change, but the penalty could not, from the very nature of the circumstances, be taken off. So that repentance, in its full sense, had no place. And such is the meaning of the 'place of repentance,' wherever occurring. We do not mean by it an opportunity to repent in a man's own bosom, to be sorry for what he has done, for this may be under any circumstances, and this might have been with Esau; but we mean a *chance, by repenting, to repair.*" There is an awful permanence in deeds. They cannot be undone. Words once spoken are beyond recall. Opportunities once lost are lost for ever. Others may, perhaps, be granted; but those are irrevocably gone.

Let us learn: 1. *To curb strong impulses by reason and by conscience.* 2. *To maintain the proper relation between the present and temporary, and the future and abiding.* 3. *To keep the sensuous subordinate to the spiritual.* This brings us to the practical point of the writer of the Epistle. Let us not forsake what is right and true to escape from any present difficulty or loss or pain, or to secure any present pleasure. Let us not turn away from Christ to escape the cross.—W. J.

Vers. 18—24.—*The exalted privileges of sincere Christians.* "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched," etc. This paragraph exhibits a striking contrast between Sinai and Zion—the Mosaic and the Christian dispensations. The chief points of the contrast seem to be these: 1. *The sensuous at Sinai is contrasted with the spiritual at Zion.* At Sinai the manifestations were palpable, visible, audible (vers. 18, 19); at Zion they were heavenly, and to some extent invisible and inaudible. The former appealed chiefly to the senses, the latter to the soul. 2. *The rigorous at Sinai is contrasted with the gracious at Zion.* The former mountain was palpable, but no one of the people might draw near unto it, and if even a beast touched it it was to be stoned. The whole of the proceedings were awful and terrible. The revelation was of Law. Love was there, for love was the fountain of the Law; but Law, solemn and inflexible, and not love, was conspicuous. But at Zion, love and not Law was conspicuous. "The Law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." In the Christian dispensation grace is unmistakably clear and prominent. Here the voices are musical, the utterances are inviting. 3. *The repellant at Sinai is contrasted with the attractive at Zion.* At the giving of the Law, "they that heard intreated that no word more should be spoken unto them. . . . And so fearful was the appearance that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake." But in this later dispensation men are drawn by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. To the sincere soul Christianity is bright, alluring, and blessed. Let us now consider the exalted privileges of sincere Christians as set forth in our text.

I. *THEY ARE MEMBERS OF A DISTINGUISHED SOCIETY.* "Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." We do not apply these words to heaven, but to the Church upon earth, the kingdom of Christ here and now; because (1) in the sacred Scriptures Mount Zion is not set forth as the antithesis of heaven, but of the Christian Church (Gal. iv. 24—26); and (2) the text affirms that Christians "are come unto Mount Zion," etc. It is the statement of a present fact, and not a future prospect. Mark the characteristics of this distinguished society. 1. *It is spiritual in its constitution.* "The heavenly Jerusalem." The qualification for admission into this society is spiritual, not carnal; a thing of character, not of circumstances; not physical descent from Abraham, but moral approximation to Christ. Its worship is not restricted by local limitations, or by conventional and artificial rules;

but by spiritual conditions only. "The hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. . . . The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth," etc. (John iv. 21—24). Wherever there is a devout soul, there is the true Zion. The contrite heart can consecrate for itself a temple wherever it may be. 2. *It is hallowed by the Divine presence.* "Ye are come unto Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." Previous to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, the name Mount Zion "was applied exclusively to the eastern hill, or that on which the temple stood." The glory of the Holy Land to the pious Hebrew was Jerusalem, and the glory of Jerusalem was Mount Zion, and the glory of Mount Zion was the temple, and the glory of the temple was the Shechinah (cf. Ps. xlviii. 1—3; lxxx. 1; cxxxii. 13, 14). "The Lord is in his holy temple." "He sitteth between the cherubim. The Lord is great in Zion." But in a higher sense he dwells in the consecrated heart, and in the Christian Church. "Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them." 3. *Its members are individually consecrated to God.* "To the Church of the Firstborn." The firstborn of Israel were dedicated to God as his priests (Exod. xiii. 1, 2, 11—15). Afterwards the tribe of Levi was selected for this service instead of the firstborn of all the tribes (Numb. iii. 11—13). And it is characteristic of every Christian that he is consecrated to God; he is a priest unto God. "Ye are a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. . . . Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." 4. *Its members are heirs to a glorious inheritance.* All Christians are called "firstborn" because they are all heirs of the heavenly inheritance. "We are children of God: and if children, then heirs," etc. Heirs "unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled," etc. 5. *Its members are individually known unto God.* They "are written in heaven." They are "not yet citizens of heaven who have taken up their full citizenship by passing through death, but persons to whom their citizenship is assured, they being as yet here below." This enrolment in the book of life is the sign that the citizenship of the Christian is in heaven, and that his name and character are known unto God. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." The good Shepherd "calloeth his own sheep by name" (cf. Luke x. 20).

II. *THEY ARE FAVOURABLY RELATED TO ANGELIC BEINGS.* "Ye are come . . . to an innumerable company of angels." Notice: 1. *The great number of angelic beings.* The text speaks of "myriads of angels," an expression which is employed to indicate a great multitude. St. John in spiritual vision saw "many angels round about the throne; . . . and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." 2. *The joyful spirit of angelic beings.* "And to myriads, the festal host of angels." Alford: "*παρρηγοί* is the complete, multitudinous, above all, jubilant, festal, and blissful assembly." "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." They rejoice in the progress of the cause of Christ, in the extension of his Church, in the triumphs of his cross and Spirit. 3. *The gracious relation of angelic beings to Christians.* Angels were present at Sinai in great numbers, and assisted at the giving of the Law (cf. ch. ii. 2; Deut. xxxiii. 2; Gal. iii. 19). But their ministry upon that occasion seems to have been majestic and terrible, fitted to awe but not to attract men. But their relation to Christians is gracious and engaging. We are come unto them. Invisibly yet beneficently they are present with us as our spiritual helpers. "Are they not all ministering spirits?" etc.

III. *THEY ARE SYMPATHETICALLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE PERFECTED SPIRITS OF THE GOOD.* "And to the spirits of just men made perfect." We have here: 1. *The noblest portion of human beings.* "Spirits." Having laid down their bodies at death, these thinking, reflecting, loving, worshipping spirits live on in consciousness and in blessedness. 2. *A commendable character of human beings.* "Spirits of just men." Not innocent; but pardoned and purified from sin through the mercy of God. Spirits of all the just who have entered the eternal state, from righteous Abel down to the spirit which last responded to the home-call. 3. *The most excellent condition of human beings.* "Spirits of just men made perfect." Made perfect, not in degree, but in character and condition. Perfect as being without error and sin, but not as being incapable of further progress. They are without sin, but they will grow in holiness. They are without error, but they will increase in knowledge. "Made perfect;" then

how different are they from even the best of men in this world! Many an imperfection will be put off by us at death; many an error will be corrected soon as we see things in the clear light of eternity. "We are come . . . to the spirits of just men made perfect." They are not lost to us. Life and immortality are brought to light in the gospel. Deep and tender is their interest in us. We are one with them in sacred and blessed sympathy.

"E'en now by faith we join our hands
With those that went before;
And greet the blood-besprinkled bands
On the eternal shore."

(C. Wesley.)

IV. THEY HAVE GRACIOUS ACCESS TO THE GREAT GOD. "And to God the Judge of all." At Sinai the Israelites were terrified at the signs of his presence as Lawgiver; but in this later dispensation sincere Christians draw near to him with confidence even as the Judge of all. Nay, there is a sense in which this aspect of his being attracts them. They are yet in the world. They have enemies to contend against and wrongs to endure; and they look up to God as their righteous Judge, who will vindicate their right and their cause. We are come unto him. He is not a cold, impassive, remote being. He is near to us; he loves us, draws us to himself, and blesses us with his gracious presence. We confide in him, and realize our holiest impulses and most blessed experiences in fellowship with him.

V. THEY ARE SAVINGLY RELATED TO JESUS CHRIST. "And to Jesus the Mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel." 1. *We are come to him as our Mediator.* By him God is brought so near to us, and we are reconciled to God. Through him we enter into the possession of all our exalted and rich privileges. 2. *We are come to him who effected his mediatorial work by the sacrifice of his own life.* The blood of sprinkling is his own precious blood, which he shed for us. "We have our redemption through his blood," etc. And this blood speaks of the infinite love of God, and the full and free forgiveness of sins, and spiritual perfection, and endless progress and blessedness.

CONCLUSION. *Great privileges involve great responsibilities.*—W. J.

Ver. 28.—*The kingdom which cannot be moved.* "We receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved." "A kingdom which cannot be moved." Is there such a thing? What is it? Where is it? The great empires of antiquity—Egypt, Assyria, Greece, Rome—are all gone. Where is the immovable kingdom? Is there anything that cannot be changed, shaken, and destroyed? Physical comforts are torn away from their possessors. Health is not immovable. Wealth is not a lasting kingdom. Property is "unstable as water." What is the "kingdom that cannot be shaken"? Men are removed from earth and from the dwellers thereon. Entire families sometimes pass away. Generations are carried hence into the invisible world. Even whole races of men have completely disappeared from the earth. With all these changes, where shall we find the unchangeable and the permanent? The oak that has braved the storms of centuries, and the cedar and the yew whose years must be counted by thousands, will one day crumble into dust which will be scattered by the breeze. But the mountains and rocks—surely they abide? The sacred Scriptures speak of them as "the everlasting mountains, the perpetual hills." Those Scriptures also say, "Surely the mountain falling cometh to nought, and the rock is removed out of his place. The waters wear the stones." "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed." Geology proclaims the same truth. Even the very Churches pass away. The Jewish Church has departed, or only a feeble and faded remnant of it is left. And Christian Churches are planted, flourish, decay, and die. Is there anything here that is immutable—anything "that cannot be moved"? The kingdom which our text says is immovable is Christianity. In other places it is called "the kingdom of God," "the kingdom of Christ," "the kingdom of heaven." We also read, "The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." And again, "The Law," i.e. the Jewish economy, "was given by Moses; grace and truth," i.e. Christianity, "came by Jesus Christ." "Grace and truth," "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost," are immutable and eternal; these are the elements which constitute the

"kingdom which cannot be moved." Christian Churches may pass away; but Christianity ever abides and ever grows. Christian denominations and sects may die; but the Church of Christ ever lives and advances towards its position of supreme and world-wide sovereignty. Again, "grace and truth," "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost," as realized by the individual Christian, are not constant and permanent. Our consciousness of these things may vary and fluctuate; but the things themselves cannot be moved. The presence of the sun in the heavens may be veiled from us; but the sun is there, calm and luminous as ever. Clouds may hide every star from our view, and present to us a canopy of pitchy blackness; but the stars are not lost—beyond and above the clouds they pursue their appointed courses. So the consciousness of the kingdom within us may be disturbed and suspended and lost for a time; but the kingdom is not lost, or suspended, or disturbed. If we have received Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord, we have "received a kingdom which cannot be moved." Let us now fix our attention upon some of the chief teachings of the text.

I. CHRISTIANITY IS A SOVEREIGN POWER. It is "a kingdom;" "the kingdom of God;" "the kingdom of Christ;" "the kingdom of heaven;" the "kingdom which cannot be moved." Jesus claims supreme authority over the heart and life of all men, and over all institutions and societies. He claims to be the King of men. Have we received Christianity as a ruling power in our lives? Some accept it only for purposes of study and speculation; others only by manifesting towards it a little respect and interest; others admit it to a limited measure of control over them. But none of these has received the "kingdom which cannot be moved." He who has not welcomed the Lord Jesus as his King has not truly welcomed him at all. Personal Christianity is a sovereign power and person in the soul, ruling the thoughts and words, the desires and feelings, the purposes and actions of our being—ruling, in a word, our whole life. Have we so received Christ?

II. CHRISTIANITY AS A SOVEREIGN POWER IS UNCHANGEABLE AND EVERLASTING. "A kingdom which cannot be moved." We have seen that this kingdom is "grace and truth," "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." These are immutable and abiding things. They are essential to the being and character of God, and he is unchangeable and eternal. And these things as possessed by his people are derived from him. Ephemeral is the seeming reign of falsehood and wrong; eternal is the reign of truth and righteousness—the kingdom of God. Amid change and decay, amid revolution and dissolution, here is an abiding thing, a sovereign and eternal thing. Have we received the "grace and truth," the "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost"? Then we have received the immovable kingdom, the kingdom which rests upon the eternal and unchangeable God. 1. *Mark the blessedness of the true Christian.* Amid all the painful uncertainties and changes of this life, he possesses the unalterable and the certain. He has a portion and an inheritance which shall not be taken away from him. He will carry his wealth with him into eternity, and it will increase for ever. "Grace and truth," "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost," are incorporated with his very being, and will never pass away from him. The blessed and permanent "kingdom of God is within" him. 2. *Here is the basis of an argument for the immediate acceptance of Christianity, or rather, of the Christ.* Christianity is not to give place to any other remedial dispensation. The patriarchal form of religion passed away, and the Mosaic system followed; that in its turn passed away with the advent and growth of Christianity, which will never be removed until the end of time. God will not speak to us with any voice more attractive, persuasive, or convincing than that by which he now addresses us. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not," etc. (vers. 25—27). Accept at once the blessings and obligations of this kingdom.—W. J.

Ver. 1.—*The cloud of witnesses.* I. THE NUMBER OF THE WITNESSES. From many ages, of both sexes, and in all positions of life. Our attention is called, not merely to a cloud, but to so great a cloud. Birds gather together in clouds. And the cloud may be so great as to compel notice. Whether we shall be impressed by the number of the witnesses depends altogether on the spirit in which we consider them. If we are ourselves of a believing disposition, we shall quickly recognize faith in the lives of others. We shall notice faith in the peculiarity of its beginnings, in the nobleness

of its progress, and the certainty of its results. By its fruits we shall distinguish faith from credulity. Nor shall we think any the less of it because those who have it lack other elements of life which are valued by the world. Those who come together into so great a cloud of witnesses because they have faith will remain together. They will be found to have other qualities giving union. The figure here employed has already had its correspondence in the expression, "Time would fail me to tell." The cloud of witnesses is but another way of saying that God's true people, the believing host, the children of faithful Abraham, are as the stars of the sky for multitude, the sand by the sea-shore innumerable.

II. THE AGREEMENT OF THE WITNESSES. They are not like witnesses in a court of justice, for there some are on one side and some on the other. All have the same story to tell. Faith came to them with a distinct imperative word. The course they took was not one that could be commended by reasons suited to the common understanding of men. Their life, to a certain extent, has been separate from men, and not unfrequently men have opposed them. But always they have the same story to tell as to results. The way of the wicked perishes. It begins with self-indulgence and self-confidence, with the fear of man and after man's wisdom, and so it goes on till the hour of exposure comes. But the way of the believer is out of darkness into light, out of the midst of difficulties and toils into a path where he can run with enlarged heart.

III. THE MATTER OF THEIR TESTIMONY. They have to speak of God's dealings, God's guiding. Their lives are set before us as giving occasion to manifest the Divine character. Everywhere in Scripture just those things are recorded which through human lives show Divine working. The testimony of believers is ever valuable, just in proportion as they make it clear that it is not they who live, not they who work, but God, Christ, living and working in them.

IV. THE MANNER OF THEIR TESTIMONY. It is given unconsciously. It is given out of the past and as we read it in the page of history. Abel, being dead, yet speaketh. It is Abel, dying because of his faith, who impresses us. Oftentimes in the proceedings of human justice that which helps most to a right decision is some silent witness, in the shape of a paper or a weapon, or some such article, the existence and position of which are incompatible with any but a certain conclusion. It has not been sworn, and it cannot be perjured; it says more than a thousand sworn witnesses can say. The great believers of old may be helpers of our faith, simply by our taking the trouble to consider what we know about them in the humble, earnest spirit of the seeker after truth.

V. THE CONSEQUENT RESPONSIBILITY. It is a serious matter to be encompassed by this cloud of witnesses. They may rise up in judgment against us, whereas they were not given for this, but to help us into like precious faith. And as the world goes on the matter becomes more serious still. The cloud, large in the days of this writer, is immensely larger now. Luminous then, what a heart of light it now has, radiating forth its truth and encouragement for all who have eyes to see!—Y.

Ver. 1.—*The appointed struggle.* I. THE FIGURE EMPLOYED. The particular form of it is unfamiliar, but the essence is familiar enough, and likely long to be so. We are led to think of the natural man, ambitious to triumph by virtue of physical or intellectual strength. His motive is self-regarding, yet it leads him to a measure of self-restraint; indeed, he will go extraordinary lengths in checking self-indulgence if only he may stand first when the struggle is done. A man may be very low in the scale of humanity and yet have the spirit of emulation in him very strong. Now, by this figure, men thirsting for fame and honour have their thoughts turned away from low aims to the highest aim a man can cherish; from aims that bring envy, waste of human faculties, and ultimate disappointment, to an aim which may bring to every man the richest, the most abiding of gains without the slightest loss to any brother man. While there is a stimulus in this exhortation for every Christian, it is specially directed to ambitious climbing, striving men. It tells them to relinquish purposes that at the very best can bring them only a corruptible crown, and bend their energies to the attainment of that divinely produced joy which is set before them even as it was before Jesus. We who are not engaged in the struggle set before us here need to ask what sort of a struggle we are engaged in. We are summoned from the lower to the higher.

II. THE AIM PROPOSED TO US. The struggle is the thing mentioned, but behind the struggle stands that for which the struggle is engaged in. Each man, looking at possibilities through his natural eyes, has his own ideal of how to reward the exercised faculties of life. So many kinds of men, so many ideals. But God our Maker has also his ideal for the universal man. His purpose is that the whole man should win a victory. Not that the intellect should be victorious while the spiritual nature lies crushed and dishonoured. Jesus had a joy set before him; so also have we. And even as the joy of this world's successes lies at the end of a long and toilsome struggle, so it must be in the joy of spiritual success. We put struggles before ourselves in order to satisfy ambition; God puts a struggle before us to comply with a sense of duty. Here is the proposition of this arduous career put right before us in our onward path. Shall we accept it or shall we evade it? We cannot very well ignore it.

III. PRELIMINARY CONDITIONS OF PROGRESS. We are to lay aside every weight. Wherein a weight consists is to be determined by its character in relation to the result of the struggle. The moment anything hinders progress in spirituality it is to be forsaken. As to the easily besetting sin, perhaps that is best taken not as indicating something different from the weight, but in apposition to it. The variety of expression enforces the one paramount duty of putting aside everything, external and internal, which would tend to failure. The easily besetting sin is generally spoken of as being unbelief. But it is not enough to look at unbelief on its negative side; we must look at it positively as a state of the heart wherever it goes out after things that are seen, mere appearances, satisfactions of the fleshly appetite. Then, when obstacles are thrown off, we can patiently pursue our path. We shall need patience because there will be external obstacles—a world not sympathizing with us, and indeed crossed and thwarted by us in our steady adherence to the course God has marked out. But the patience must be that quality which in the New Testament is specially dignified by the name "the patience of hope." The toil, the strain, the seasons of weariness and of special difficulty, must all be cheered by the well-grounded hope of ultimate victory. The dreadful thing in all struggles is when they end in failure. In the race run by the Christian all succeed.—Y.

Ver. 2.—*Looking to Jesus.* I. WHAT WE LOOK AWAY FROM. For the idea in the verb is that of looking away from one thing to some other thing. We must always have some object before the eyes of our mind, and very often it is an object that will cause the natural man discomposure, doubt, vacillation in his practice. Looking round on your companions professedly in the path of faith, you may feel that they are doing anything but live the life of faith. You may see some backsliding, Demas-like, through their love of the present evil world. And even the best of brother believers have their moments of failure and misapprehension. Then, moreover, as we look round us, we see not only the cloud of testifying believers, we see a cloud given over to the things of this world. To mingle with them in many relations is a necessity of life. Insensibly they affect that standard of excellence at which we ought to aim. We see something which is not God's standard, but in our self-deception, honestly enough, we take it to be so. And so we must look away from the ordinary surroundings of life, and even from the achievements of ordinary believers, to one in whom we shall find every good we find in man, without alloy, without contradiction, and with special power in us to produce perseverance and aspiration.

II. WHOM WE LOOK TO. What a great matter it is to have an Object so satisfactory, so inspiring, on which our eyes may rest, on which our thoughts may dwell! But we must look at that Object in a certain way. As we have looked for faith in Abraham, in Moses, in the prophets, and found it, so we must look for faith in Jesus. It is of the greatest importance for us to see that the life which Jesus lived in the flesh was a life of faith—faith in his Father in heaven, faith in his brethren upon the earth. And what is to be noticed most of all is this combination of Author and Finisher. We see Jesus beginning his course of faith, we also see him finishing it. With regard to other believers, it is by an act of faith on our part that we comprehend a reward to be in store for them. But the reward of Jesus is before our eyes. That reward is to be clearly seen by us if we have any power of spiritual perception at all. We see the faith of one who submits to death with the certainty that he will rise again, and in due time he

does rise again. Jesus is at the right hand of God, for he does actually rule over many human hearts. He did not pass through suffering and shame into an obscurity which was only the last stage of the suffering and shame. His present glory is a manifest thing, manifest in the light of more tests than one. It is a glory perceptible from the common historian's point of view. The richness and depth of that glory become more and more apparent when the eye of a real Christian is turned upon it; he looks for things and sees things which to the world are only names. And yet what appears to our eyes is a very imperfect representation of the reality proposed to him and seen by him. He saw more with his sense of truth, his power of insight, his superiority to this world's considerations, than we can see. And along with the end he saw the way to it. Well might he warn rash, would-be disciples to count the cost, for he himself had counted the cost to begin with. Thus must we ever look at Jesus, not in one part of his career, but in all taken together. The cross and the shame must not be separated from the seat of honour and of power. Nor must the end be looked at apart from the way. We also have a joy set before us, namely, that of attaining to companionship with Jesus. When we look away to Jesus we look, not only to an example, to an inspiration, but also to a goal.—Y.

Vers. 2, 3.—*What Christ was exposed to.* I. PHYSICAL PAIN. He endured a cross. When the hour and authority of darkness came upon him, he was left to those tender mercies of the wicked which are cruel. It was part of his victory to endure whatever men chose to inflict in the way of pain. All who afterwards had to endure crosses, all who were thrown to wild beasts, burnt, etc., knew that their Saviour had been in exactly the same path. He did not choose the cross; it came in the way he had to take to the joy. If it had been the Roman amphitheatre, the stake, or the rack of the Inquisition, he would have gone with equal willingness. Whatever suffering evil men in their recklessness thought fit to inflict, he was ready for it. And we, always determined in the way of duty, service, honour, and reward, must also be ready for all that comes in the way of pain. Notice the force of "endure," the verb corresponding to the substantive *τροπή*. Not only did he bear the cross as a Stoic might have done, in grim silence, but with the veritable patience of one testifying for God. In all his bearing there was love, meekness, and patient waiting for the joy yet to be revealed.

II. A SHAMEFUL REPUTATION. Christ might have been put to death cruelly and yet not shamefully. Shame, according to human reckoning, was added to keen pain. But human shame could not reach to the height of our Leader's magnanimity. He had too clear a view of everything to be affected by mere reputation. The cross is not shameful to us. Things reckoned shameful are largely so according to custom. What would be shameful in one age and country has no such repute in another age and country. Hence, while we can at once see the pain of the cross, we cannot see the shame. But we can understand that there would be a shame when we recollect that it has even been counted a privilege to die by the headsman's axe, and not by the hangman's rope. And this shame would be a great difficulty in the way of the apostles in preaching Christ; indeed, we know it actually was so. It is not the slightest difficulty now, however. How an old Roman would have laughed to hear it predicted that the cross of crucifixion could ever become an ornament! What men reckoned shameful has proved the way to glory and exaltation. He who conquered the worst men could do to him, might well take a place at the right hand of God.

III. BITTER TAUNTS. The shameful repute of hanging on a cross could not but come into the reflections of Jesus; but also to the silent insult of the cross itself was added the bitterest words men could find. But let men do their worst. "All things work together for good to them that love God." And surely of such Jesus is *facile princeps*. Taunts bound back from the innocent and the God-fearing as arrows do from one who is thoroughly clad in armour.—Y.

Vers. 5—10.—*God's discipline of his children.* Continually in the New Testament, when we get into circumstances of doubt and pain, we are brought back to the rich truth and comfort to be found in the fatherhood of God. Here, as elsewhere, an *à fortiori* argument is employed. If an earthly father, being evil, gives good gifts to his children, how much more will the heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them asking

him? And even so, if an earthly father disciplines his children, making them do and bear many hard things that they may grow into a useful manhood, how much more will the heavenly Father make his children to suffer hardness that they may be fit to run in the way of his commandments hereafter?

I. **HOW A BRIGHT SIDE MAY BE FOUND TO SUFFERING.** They were evidently a sadly tried community to whom this letter was written. What shall be done to comfort and encourage them? In the fourth verse there is a very common and not altogether useless ground of comfort suggested. Things are bad, no doubt, but they might be worse. "You have to suffer a good deal in resisting sin, but not yet have you resisted to blood." This view of suffering, however, useful as it is for the moment, soon leads on to the question, "Why should others suffer, or seem to suffer, more than I?" And so the writer quickly turns to bid his friends remember that they are the children of God, and if they only recollect their character and destiny, and live under the ever-deepening influence of this recollection, then they will see that nothing can do them abiding harm. All the comfort of the exhortation passes away, unless it mingles with the assurance of the Spirit bearing witness with our spirits that we are indeed the children of God. Suffering must cast an ever-thickening gloom upon the heart unless the hopes of a child of God come in to shed abroad an amply countervailing light.

II. **THE RESPONSIBILITY THAT SUFFERING LAYS UPON US.** It is a serious thing for one who reckons himself a Christian to pass through suffering and difficulty. He is expected to be the better for it all. If he uses it aright, according to the wisdom communicated from above, then assuredly he will emerge from it with a purified heart and a clearer spiritual vision. The first rule is that suffering is to be escaped if possible. But if it cannot be escaped, it must not merely be endured. It must be received as an agent of God's will in making us better and more capable children. Hence the plain truth that we shall be held responsible for all we have had in the way of pain.

III. **THE USE GOD CAN MAKE OF HUMAN WICKEDNESS.** Those here sought to be comforted were evidently suffering persecution. This is distinctly suggested in the expression "striving against sin." And thus it is made manifest how the discipline comes in. Much suffering could have been escaped by yielding to the temptation of compromise, or of total retreat from the Christian's position. Little do the enemies of Christ imagine the service they render his true people by the demonstrations of hostility. We are forced to a firmer grasp of truth and to a more penetrating and exact estimate of our spiritual possessions.—Y.

Ver. 11.—*The fruit of discipline.* I. **A LESSON FROM BOYISH EXPERIENCE.** The discipline of earthly parents, while we are passing through it, is all pain and no pleasure. Even when exercised with wisdom and consideration, the discipline must be painful; and in many instances there is a needless harshness which increases the pain. Parents are apt to take the course of discipline which gives them the least trouble. But even harsh and stern discipline is better than indulgence, infinitely better than letting the child have its own way. What bitter pain *men* have had to suffer, because as *children* they suffered little or none! The boy at school finds it very hard to be kept at the desk and the book, when the sun shines bright through the window, and he hears the merry cry of other lads at play; and hard it must seem while he is going through it. But it will soon slip past and manhood come, and then how glad he will be for knowledge gained and for facility in the use of the knowledge! How he will then rejoice over the encircling rigour of the parental will!

II. **THE FALLACY OF PRESENT ESTIMATES.** We are bad judges of the experiences through which we are passing. A schoolboy's estimate of life is amusing to listen to, but when we come to reflect over it, the reflection makes us sad. For we know well how different things are from what he thinks them to be. And what changes there must be in his view of life before it can be, even approximately, a true one! Therefore, whenever we listen to the confident and artless prattling of boyish ignorance, let there be in it a warning for us, a fresh admonition to walk by faith and not by sight. What we know not now and cannot know, we shall know hereafter. We must not kick against circumstances, for they are doubtless the very safety of our life if we only knew it. It is the greatest folly to say that a thing must be bad for us because it is painful and straight opposite to the strongest inclinations of the moment.

III. THE DISCIPLINE OF GOD NEED NOT BE GRIEVOUS. As a general rule discipline is grievous, always grievous to the child. And even to one who is sure of his position of sonship towards God, discipline comes as a hard thing. But what makes it hard is that the flesh as yet counts for more than the spirit. Only let the spirit have free course and be glorified, and then joy will spring up in the very midst of the discipline. The man who wrote this letter, whoever he was, had not yet himself got out of the era of discipline; but the grievousness of discipline must have been abundantly sweetened by all the divinely born hopes and assurances that would throng into his heart. All the considerations here pressed upon the suffering believer are meant to bring joy in the midst of discipline. Joy especially there should be in the certainty of fruit. Youthful discipline, however careful and however successful in appearance for the time, yet may show little of result in after life. Something that no discipline can avert spoils the manhood. But we have the joy of feeling sure that God's discipline of us cannot fail, if we work together with him in submissive docility and patience.—Y.

Vers. 14, 15.—*The worst perils of the Christian life.* It may be presumed that these people suffering persecution are somewhat discontented and murmuring under it. Thus persecution may become a temptation; it may bulk so largely before the eye as to hide far worse perils. It would almost seem as if the writer had the Beatitudes in mind. He has been seeking to illustrate the blessedness of those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. And now in ver. 14 he urges not to lose the blessedness of the peacemaker, and the blessedness of those who are made able to look on God. There are four important counsels in these two verses.

I. THE DILIGENT PURSUIT OF PEACE. This is a recommendation both to the individual and the Church. The maltreated man is very likely to have a settled feeling of anger against the man who maltreats him. That we should behave rightly under suffering is far more important than that we should escape suffering. Notice the intensive force of the verb. The same verb is used to signify persecution. The same pursuing energy that persecutors employed against Christians was to be employed by Christians themselves in preserving a feeling of settled peace towards the persecutors. Animosity and irritation towards others, however justified it may seem by their conduct, will destroy all peace in our own hearts. Even when the necessities of duty bring us into marked controversy with others, we must in the very height of the dispute show that our aim is concord, not discord.

II. THE EQUALLY DILIGENT PURSUIT OF HOLINESS. Holiness here may be taken as the equivalent of what is elsewhere called purity of heart. That is the blessedness of the pure in heart that they are made able to look on God. Our right state towards all men is to have perfectly peaceful inclinations towards them, and doing everything that shall incline them to reciprocate the peace. Our right state towards God is to have a heart perfectly consecrated to him. And the diligent pursuit of peace and holiness must go together. You cannot follow the one without following the other. That can be no true peace towards man which is gotten by compromising our position towards God. Nor can that be true holiness which is very profuse in services to God and yet leaves room to indulge animosities toward man.

III. WATCHFULNESS TO MAKE FULL USE OF THE DIVINE GRACE. We must not lose the loving favour of God. We must keep in such paths of spiritual courage and enterprise as will preserve to us continually his loving smile. What shall we be if God be against us? It will be a poor compensation to escape trial, if at the same time we miss God's help out of our life.

IV. WATCHFULNESS TO STOP THE BEGINNINGS OF CHURCH MISCHIEF. Watch the Christian community as you would watch a garden. You have not only to nourish what has been planted so that it may bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness, but you must watch against the entrance of noxious plants. In a large garden something of this kind may easily make headway unless there be the most vigilant eye upon it. All mischief must be stopped in the very beginning, if possible.—Y.

Vers. 16, 17.—*Esau—a warning.* Esau is an excellent example of what serious results may come out of sheer thoughtlessness. There were special reasons why Esau should be a careful, thoughtful, prudent man. Thoughtfulness is the need of every man

in such a maze as life is continually tending to become, but the position of some makes thoughtfulness a special duty. So it was with Esau. He had the birthright. To him it specially belonged to continue and increase the prosperity and credit of the family. Yet for the sake of a single meal, because in his hunger he could not wait a little, he sold his birthright. He did, indeed, make a pretext of saying as it were, "What shall it profit me to keep my birthright and lose my life?" but this very question showed that he had never made a careful estimate of his privileges and responsibilities. The folly of Esau's conduct is plain enough to us; would that we could see as clearly how often it is reproduced in the reckless, self-destructive conduct of those to whom belongs the birthright of children of God!

I. OUR FREQUENT THOUGHTLESSNESS AS TO OUR POSITION. Esau is called a profane person. A profane person is one who treats sacred things as if they were common. Esau was himself a sacred person as the firstborn, but the thought of his peculiar position never seems to have gained real entrance to his mind. And so it too often is with us. The serious and sublimer side of life, the side that connects us with God, Christ, and eternity, is too seldom in our minds. Too seldom! Why, that is too complimentary a word as regards many; they never seem to think of this side of life at all. And assuredly none of us thinks of it as we ought to do. We are more valuable in the eyes of God than we are in our own. God looks on each one of us as on a pearl of great price, but we view the pearl of our position with only swinish eyes.

II. THE ULTIMATE RESULT OF THAT THOUGHTLESSNESS. Man is made to think, and think deeply, on his position, duties, and destiny; and to this actual course of reflection he is driven sooner or later. Man cannot escape the necessities inherent in his nature. The hint here, in this parallel from Esau, is that these reflections may come too late. Omnipotence cannot bring back the past. If you have failed to sow in the spring, you cannot reap in the autumn. Nor will you be able to escape the bitterness of reflecting that this absence of the proper harvest is your own fault. Thousands in the earlier years of life do as Esau did. They barter the joys of self-denial and holy aspiration for self-indulgence. The fragrance of worldly pleasures rises into their nostrils, and they never stop to consider the height and depth, the breadth and length, of a life redeemed by Christ and sanctified by his Holy Spirit. Then, when the passing pleasure is past and gone, they come face to face with eternal realities, and they are not ready for them. Yet the parallel with Esau must not be pushed too far. He found no place of repentance so far as the earthly birthright was concerned. But that is not to say that Esau has lost his share in spiritual and eternal realities. Isaac could not give him the blessing that belonged to another. As long as he sought the earthly blessing he might well seek with tears, and seek in vain. Along with the folly, suffering, and futile regrets of Esau we must take the folly, suffering, and profitable repentance of the prodigal in the parable.—Y.

VERS. 18—24.—*Sinai and Zion.* Esau bewailed his lost birthright, and yet to what did that birthright lead the posterity of him who gained it? See the posterity of Jacob gathered round the terrible mountain in the wilderness. The posterity of Esau might perhaps congratulate themselves on having escaped the constraints of Jehovah that fell so sorely on the kindred children of Jacob. If, then, this birthright, over the foolish casting away of which Esau shed such copious and fruitless tears, led to such terrible experiences, how should we guard the privilege that brings us, not to Sinai, but Zion, with all its durable attractions and companionships? Such seems to be the thought underlying the exhibition of these two contrasted pictures.

I. THE SAME GOD MANIFESTS HIS PRESENCE IN TWO DIFFERENT WAYS. Zion is very different from Sinai, but for all that Sinai must precede Zion. This, it may be said, is not true to every individual experience. Not true, perhaps, in strict sequence of time; but every human life must know something of Sinai if it would know Zion to the full. Every human being must know something of the Law coming by Moses, as well as the grace and truth coming by Jesus Christ. Let no complaint be made that preachers impose on the ignorant and the timid by fictitious and exaggerated terrors. Jehovah is none the less God of Sinai because since then he has become God of Zion.

II. SINAI IS MEANT FOR THE PASSING EXPERIENCE, ZION FOR THE PERMANENT ONE. The children of Israel came to Sinai for a very short time. God's anger with the

wicked abides—he is angry with the wicked every day—but it would be clean against his character as a pitiful and long-suffering God to have Sinai continually involved in smoking flame and roaring tempest. Sinai is God's appointed halting-place for us somewhere in the solemn and arduous journey of life. Zion is the goal of the journey. Many of those who trembled along with Moses at the literal Sinai have surely been gathered with Moses since upon the heavenly Zion.

III. NOTE POINTS IN THE CONTRAST. Sinai was in the *wilderness*, and there is some reason to suppose that it has now more of the wilderness than ever, that its desolation is greater than when the children of Israel camped there. Zion was in the *city*. Men lived about it all their lives. He who comes to Zion comes to an abiding company. The earthly Jerusalem where the ark dwells, typifies that heavenly Jerusalem where the God of the ark really dwells. Thence the messengers of God issue forth on their errands of righteousness and mercy, and thither they return to resume the service of the higher, holier sphere. At Sinai just men, struggling with their sense of sin, were made to feel their imperfection. On Zion just men are gathered in their purity of heart and spiritual completeness, enabled for ever to look on the face of God. The two contrasted pictures must not be pushed too much into detail. Let the imagination rather try to group each as a whole. The passage suggests two frameworks, in one of which we may gather the peculiarities of the old covenant, and in the other the peculiarities of the new.—Y.

Ver. 27.—*The purpose of the shakings.* This chapter, which has been full of comforting elements, rises to the highest kind of comfort at the close—that to be drawn by the believing heart from the conviction that stable good is coming out of all present vicissitudes. Terrible as was the shaking at Sinai, that only affected an infinitesimal part of the crust of the earth for a short time. There remains a far more terrible and searching experience. The shaking at Sinai was only a sign of Jehovah's power, but the shaking yet to come will be more than a sign; it will bring a result the most desirable of any we can imagine. Heaven and earth will be shaken, so that the heavenly Jerusalem, the place of Jehovah's glory and the abode of his saints, may at last appear in all its strength and all the excellency of its beauty. The alternate rising and falling—the one generation going and the other coming—of the present scheme of things will cease. The things of eternity will then be finally freed from all the weights and encumbrances of time, sin, and death.

I. THIS GREAT CATASTROPHE OF THE FUTURE. Vain to speculate on the mode of its happening. Far more important to be well assured that this catastrophe is coming, and to rejoice that something inexpressibly glorious and beautiful lies beyond. Only then will the perfect men in Christ Jesus be constituted into the perfect society. Only some such revolution in human affairs as is here indicated can set things right finally and completely. Good and evil are not to be for ever mingled. The Lord who has so often shaken the earth will shake both earth and heaven. Then it will be seen who is on the rock and who on the sand, who has built gold and silver and precious stones, and who wood, hay, and stubble.

II. THINGS WHICH CAN BE SHAKEN OUGHT TO BE SHAKEN. Shaken in order that they may be utterly removed from us. Each of the elect and glorified now within the walls of the new Jerusalem is there because he has known within his own experience what it is for both earth and heaven to be shaken. The whole process of life is but a continual loosening and steady progress towards the dissolution of all the corruptible frame. We are in the hands of both Builder and Destroyer. The spiritual life is strengthened and enriched, while the natural is weakened and diminished. That it is so shows that it ought to be so. All bitter and trying experiences only bring the weak and unworthy to the surface and cast it out. Like the corn placed in the ground, we must be ready to decay and die; that even as it presently breaks forth to the air and sunlight, so we may break away from our limitation and darkness into a sinless and sorrowless eternity. This truth may be illustrated (1) from the physical frame; (2) from the present mixed relations of life.

III. A very practical question is—HAVE WE EXPERIENCE OF THE UNSHAKEN THINGS? Do we know the work of the Lord Jesus to be our only secure refuge amid the tempests and earthquakes of our life? Can we look away through vicissitudes of time and sense,

and feel that far out of their reach is a kingdom of eternal life, which the Lord fills with his life and love and power? Our citizenship must be in the heavenly Jerusalem.—Y.

Ver. 28.—*The unshaken kingdom.* I. THE CARNAL HOPES OF ISRAEL. We know well from the Gospels what notions the disciples had of a visible kingdom, with its centre of power and glory in the earthly Jerusalem. It was a dominating thought among them down to the very departure of their master. They greeted him, getting ready for his ascension, with the inquiry whether he was about to restore the kingdom to Israel. And we may well suppose that among all the Hebrew Christians this hope prevailed to the last. A spiritual and invisible kingdom could not all at once become manifest. And as a visible kingdom retreated further and further into the region of improbabilities, this would add another trial to whatever came in the way of personal suffering. They had prayed the prayer, "Thy kingdom come," but prayed it too much after their own fancies. And now to their sorrowing eyes it looked a kingdom clean going for ever.

II. THE CONTRASTED OBJECT OF EVERY CHRISTIAN'S HOPE. The writer has just been dividing existing things into the shaken and the unshaken. Naturally, therefore, considering what the hopes of Hebrew Christians had been, there follows a reference to an unshaken kingdom. The true Israelite does well to keep his thoughts fixed on a kingdom. But let him be careful not to neglect the reality for the phantom. God desires a kingdom based on something more than material force, for such kingdoms can only get built up through ambition, cruelty, violence, and injustice. God has promised a kingdom, and his promise cannot be broken; but it must be kept in his own way. That kingdom has its foundation in the accepted claim and power of Christ over the individual human heart. We may say of that kingdom what Paul says of the love of God in Christ Jesus, "that neither death, nor life, . . . nor things present, nor things to come, . . . nor any other creature, should be able to shake the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ." It cometh without observation; the inspection of the natural eye will never discern it; the assaults of the natural man operate in another realm altogether.

III. THE EFFECT OF THIS RECEIVED KINGDOM. "Let us have grace," says the writer. What he really means is, "Let us show thankfulness." Instead of sorrowing over a corrupt ideal vanished, let us be deeply thankful for a Divine reality that cannot pass away. The old mode of serving God has gone for ever. The old temple, with its altar and its holy place, its sacrifices and its priests, can never be aught but a memory. The foreshadowing service of outward ceremonies is gone, and the true spiritual service has for ever taken its place. And recollect especially the same God remains. God appointed the old *λατρεία* (ch. ix. 1) from amid all the terrors of Sinai. And he is not the less God of Sinai because he appears in the gentler aspect of Father of Christ Jesus. Israel's God Jehovah was a consuming fire upon occasion, and the same indignation and power reside in him still. Whatever outward form our *λατρεία* may take—and there is much latitude in this—there must ever be a deep feeling of personal unworthiness and of humblest adoration. Outward pomp in itself, however costly, however laborious, cannot please the spiritual God; if it have no heart of spirituality and sincerity, the fires of his wrath will soon lick it all away.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUDING EXHORTATIONS.

As in St. Paul's Epistles, practical directions as to conduct conclude the treatise, such as the readers may be supposed to have especially needed. They are urged to evince and confirm the faith which was the subject of ch. xi., and to maintain their communion with the world invisible spoken of

in ch. xii., by attending especially to those daily duties which they might be in danger of forgetting. By perseverance in a life consistent with profession faith is not only evidenced, but also kept from faltering. In the course of these hortations (vers. 10—18), being suggested by one of them, there is introduced a yet additional view of the meaning of the Levitical symbolism.

Ver. 1.—Let brotherly love continue.

φιλadelphia does not mean general philanthropy, but the peculiar love of Christians to each other as brethren; "a narrower sphere within the wider sphere of *ἀγάπη*" (Delitzsch); cf. 1. Pet. ii. 17, "Honour all men, love the brotherhood;" and 2 Pet. i. 7, where Christians are exhorted to add *ἀγάπη* to their *φιλadelphia*. This grace of *φιλadelphia* they had already, and had evinced it by their conduct (cf. ch. vi. 10, etc.); they are only to take care that it continue; and let them, among other ways, evince it in hospitality (ver. 2), and in sympathy with the afflicted brethren (ver. 3).

Ver. 2.—Be not forgetful to entertain strangers (or, of hospitality): for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Allusions to this duty are frequent in the Epistles; its exercise would be of especial importance, in those days of persecution, towards scattered and destitute brethren as well as towards missionaries, though it by no means appears that it was meant to be confined to "them that are of the household of faith." Possibly some of the wavering Hebrew Christians might be becoming less ready to open their doors to the persecuted from fear of "reproach" in Jewish circles. The allusion of the latter part of the verse is evidently to Abraham and Lot (Gen. xviii. and xix.). At any time the visits even of our fellow-men may be to us as visits of angels, as being messengers of God's purposes for good, when least expected. And especially to be noted are our Lord's own words, "He that receiveth you receiveth me," etc., and "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. xxv. 40).

Ver. 3.—Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body. The Hebrew readers have been also specially commended for their past sympathy with their imprisoned and despoiled brethren (ch. x. 33, etc.), having been themselves also at the same time persecuted. Whether or not sufferers themselves now, they must not be forgetful of those that are. "As bound with them" seems best taken as expressing the sympathy of one member with another (cf. ch. x. 33, 34 and 1 Cor. xii. 26, "If one member suffer," etc.). "As being yourselves," etc., reminds them that they are still in the flesh, and so not only on this account bound to sympathize, but also liable themselves at any time to the like afflictions. Exhortations to personal purity and to contentedness follow next. Of the need, and prominence in the Epistles, of warnings against impurity see what was said on *ἀγασμὸν* (ch. xii. 14). St. Paul is given to couple covetousness and uncleanness together in his

warnings, as cognate sins, and alike incompatible with the kingdom of God (cf. 1 Cor. v. 10, 11; vi. 9, etc.; Eph. v. 8, 5; Col. iii. 5). Greediness, or inordinate desire (*πλεonexία*), may be for sensual indulgence or for wealth—the same word is used in both senses; and such *πλεonexία*, whatever its object, is fatal to the spiritual life. So here, after a warning against impurity, comes a like one against covetousness.

Ver. 4.—Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. So in the A.V. the first clause of this verse, which is taken as an assertion, the copula *ἐστι* being understood. So it is also taken by Chrysostom and other ancients. If so, it is a declaration, interposed among hortations, of the honourableness of the "estate of matrimony," with the hortatory purpose of suggesting this "remedy against sin" (as in 1 Cor. vii. 9), or as a protest against false asceticism, such as is alluded to in 1 Tim. iv. 3, "forbidding to marry." And certainly the expression, *τίμιος ὁ γάμος*, taken by itself, would most naturally have this meaning. But most modern commentators understand it as an exhortation, supplying *ἐστω*; and this for the following cogent reasons: it occurs in the midst of a series of exhortations, and is therefore more likely to be one; it is difficult to understand the connected clause, "and the bed undefiled (*καὶ ἡ κοίτη ἀμώματος*)," as a statement; and the exactly similar phrase in ver. 5, *ἀφιλάργυρος ὁ τρόπος*, seems evidently hortatory. Hence we take it to mean "Let marriage be *τίμιος* in *πάντων*." Two questions remain—that of the import of *τίμιος*, and whether *πάντων* is masculine or neuter. *Τίμιος* elsewhere, when applied to persons, means "held in honour" (as in Acts v. 34, of Gamaliel); when applied to things, it means "precious" (as in 1 Cor. iii. 12; Rev. xvii. 4; xviii. 12, 16; xxi. 19, of precious stones; in 1 Pet. i. 19, of the blood of the Lamb; 2 Pet. i. 4, of promises; Acts xx. 24, of "my own life;" Jas. v. 7, of the fruit of the earth). Bengel explains thus: "Caelibet, quibus periculum scortationis imminet, hortatur ut matrimonium contrahant, tanquam *pretiosum* quiddam agnoscences, ejusque bono digne utantur. Conf. 1 Thess. iv. 4." And, taking *πάντων* as masculine, he explains further: "Omnesque debent matrimonium magni facere, ut, si quis eo ipse non utatur, alios tamen non prohibeat." According to this view the first clause is an injunction to all to appreciate marriage, the second warns those that are married against any violation of the bond: "*Τίμιος γάμος* antitheton ad *scortatores, καὶ τὴ ἀμώματος* ad *adulteros*" (Bengel). But the more natural, and the usual, meaning of the common expression *ἐν πάντων* is

"in all things," not "among all persons" (cf. *infra*, ver. 18; also Col. i. 18; Titus ii. 9; 1 Tim. iii. 2; 2 Tim. iv. 5). If so here, *τίμος δ γάμος* must be taken rather as an injunction with respect to the sanctity of marriage when contracted: "Let it be held in honour in all respects; in all ways reverently regarded as a holy bond;" the succeeding clause, *ἡ κοίτη ἀμύρατος*, being a further explication of the same idea (cf. 1 Thess. iv. 4, "That every one of you should know how to possess his own vessel [meaning, probably, as seems to be required by the verb *κραθαί*, 'get to himself his own wife'] in sanctification and honour (*ἐν ἀγιασμῷ καὶ τιμῇ*);" where *ἐν τιμῇ* may express the same idea as *τίμος* in the text). In the conclusion of the verse "for" (*γὰρ*) suits the drift of the sentence as above understood, and is considered to be supported better than "but" (*ἀλλ*) of the Textus Receptus. Observe, lastly, that, in "God will judge," "God" is emphatic, being placed last. Though the kind of sin spoken of is lightly regarded among men, and may escape detection or punishment now, yet certainly God will judge it (cf. 1 Thess. iv. 6, "God is the Avenger of all such, as we have also forewarned you and testified;" and 1 Cor. vi. 9, where fornicators and adulterers are included among those about whom Christians are not to deceive themselves, as though they would "inherit the kingdom of God").

Ver. 5.—Let your conversation (*i.e. manner of life, or disposition*) be without covetousness; be content with such things as ye have: for he (*αὐτός*, emphatic) hath said, I will never (*i.e. in no wise*) leave thee, neither will I ever forsake thee. The reference seems to be to Deut. xxxi. 8, *Κύριος ὁ Θεός σου . . . οὐτε μὴ σε ἀφή, οὐτε μὴ σε ἐγκαταλίπη*, the same assurance being repeated in ver. 8. But similar promises occur elsewhere in the Old Testament (see Gen. xxviii. 15; Josh. i. 5; 1 Chron. xxviii. 20; Isa. xli. 17; "Est igitur instar adagii divini," Bengel).

Ver. 6.—So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me; rather, *I will not fear: what shall man do unto me!* The quotation is from Ps. cxviii. 6.

The memory of their former pastors who had finished their course is next urged upon the readers as an encouragement to perseverance in the life of faith.

Vers. 7, 8.—Remember your leaders (*τῶν ἡγουμένων ὑμῶν*, wrongly rendered in the A.V., "them that have the rule over you;" for the reference is to departed chiefs. The word is similarly used by St. Luke (see Luke xxii. 26; Acts xv. 22; also below, ver. 17 and ver. 24). St. Paul, with a like meaning, calls the rulers of the Church *οἱ*

προστάται: see Rom. xii. 8; 1 Thess. v. 12; 1 Tim. v. 17), who spake to you the Word of God; of whose conversation (*i.e. course of life, ἀναστροφῆς*), considering the end (or *issue, ἔκβασις*), imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is yesterday and to-day the same, and for ever. This allusion to departed leaders shows the comparatively late date of the Epistle. Those who had died as martyrs, and hence, having a peculiar halo round them in the issue of their lives, may be supposed to be especially referred to; such as Stephen the protomartyr at Jerusalem, James the son of Zebedee, and possibly James the Just, the acknowledged leader of the Jewish Christians. It may be that Peter, the apostle of the circumcision, had also suffered before the writing of the Epistle. This supposition, however, which would involve a date for the Epistle after St. Paul's death also, is by no means necessary. Others, too, may be alluded to of whom we have no record, but whose memory would be fresh in the minds of the readers. But it does not follow that martyrs only are intended. Others also who had died in peace, and whose end had been blessed, might be pointed to as models for the imitation of survivors. Ver. 8 must be taken as a distinct appended sentence, the watchword on which the preceding exhortation is based. Its drift is that, though successive generations pass away, Jesus Christ remains the same—the Saviour of the living as well as of the departed, and the Saviour of all to the end of time. It may be here observed that, though his eternal Deity is not distinctly expressed—for "yesterday" does not of necessity reach back to past eternity—yet the sentence can hardly be taken as not implying it. For his unchangeableness is contrasted with the changing generations of men, as is that of Jehovah in the Old Testament (*e.g.* in Ps. xc. 2—4), and surely such language would not have been used of any but a Divine Being.

Ver. 9.—Be not carried away (so, according to the best authorities, rather than *carried about*) by divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, in which they that were occupied (*literally, that walked*) were not profited. From the exhortation to imitate the faith of the departed leaders, the transition is natural to warnings against being carried away from it by new teachings. The faith, which was their faith, remains unchanged, as Jesus Christ remains unchanged; why, then, these doctrines, new and strange (cf. 1 Cor. iii. 11; Gal. i. 6—10)? What these doctrines were is not shown, except so far as is intimated by the word *σώματα* ("meats"), which reminds us at once of similar warn-

ings in St. Paul's Epistles (cf. Rom. xiv. 2, 14, 21; Col. ii. 8, 16—23; 1 Tim. iv. 3). These passages seem to refer in the first place to purely Jewish distinctions, still held to by Jewish Christians, between clean and unclean or polluted meats; and further to a new kind of asceticism, not found in the Old Testament, but based probably on notions of the impurity of matter, which led to entire abstention from flesh or wine, and also in some (1 Tim. iv. 3) from marriage; also, as appears from the passage in Colossians, a false philosophy about angels and the spiritual world. We may perceive in these allusions the germs at least of later Gnostic heresies, such as found (as that of the Ebionites) their first congenial soil in Jewish circles; Oriental theosophy, or neo-Platonic philosophy, being supposed to have been engrafted on Jewish modes of thought. Some, misled by what is said in ver. 10, see in the word *βρώμασιν* an allusion to those sacrifices of the Law which were eaten by the worshippers, against any fancied obligation to partake in which the readers are supposed to be warned. But the word is never so applied in the Old Testament or the New (see above, ch. ix. 10; Lev. xi. 34; 1 Macc. i. 16; Rom. xiv. 15, 20, 31; 1 Cor. vi. 13, viii. 8, 13); nor would such error be likely to be classed among "strange doctrines." The drift of the warning is that the religion of the gospel does not consist in any of these notions or observances, the supposed importance of meats being specially noted, and that to make them its essence is a misconception of its whole meaning, and a departure from the faith: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17).

Ver. 10.—We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. Here there is a plain allusion to the eating of offered sacrifices. If, then, there was no such allusion in the preceding verse, what is the connection of thought? It appears to be this: "Some would teach you that meats are of religious importance. Nay, but what are meats to us who have Christ himself for our spiritual food? This is our peculiar privilege, not shared by the very priests of the old dispensation." Then, in ver. 11, "That this is so is shown by the very symbolism of the Day of Atonement." Then, in ver. 12, "Let us, then, be well content to leave Judaism entirely, and cleave to Christ alone." By "those that serve (*λατρεύοντες*) the tabernacle" are meant the priests of the Law, whose service is, as in former passages, referred to as still going on. It is evidently implied that we have the right which they have not.

Vers. 11, 12.—For the bodies of these

beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the High Priest for sin (i.e. as sin offerings; for this sense of *ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτίας*, cf. ch. x. 6), are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered without the gate. The allusion is to the sin offerings on the Day of Atonement—the bullock for the high priest, and the goat for the people. Of the flesh of some sacrifices—of ordinary peace offerings—the people ate, being themselves "partakers of the altar;" that of ordinary sin offerings was partaken of by the priests alone; but the special sin offerings of the great day, which typified complete atonement, and the blood of which alone was taken into the holiest of all, were consumed entirely by fire without the camp, and not even the priests might eat of them (Lev. xvi. 27, etc.). This part of the ceremonial, not mentioned in ch. ix., completed the symbolism of the Day of Atonement. It not only typified (together with the other goat that was set free) the entire removal of sin from the congregation; it also signified that the Law itself made none, not even the priests, partakers in such complete atonement. Christ fulfilled the first significance of this type by suffering "without the gate;" the Jews, in casting him out from their midst, were the unconscious instruments of his so fulfilling it; he thus bare and took away the sins of all outside the holy city which represented the Israel of God. But further, in him is supplied what under the Law was wanting; for of him, the true Sin Offering, we may all partake: he declared this himself when he spoke of our eating his flesh and drinking his blood—in which words the mention of the blood as well as of the flesh is peculiarly significant; for of the blood, which was "given upon the altar to make atonement for sins" (Lev. xvii. 11), none might in any case under the Law partake; but of him we even drink the blood, in token that atonement is completed, and that we are now full partakers in all its benefits. The only seeming discrepancy between the type and the Antitype, as above set forth, is in the order of the different parts of the old ceremonial. The sin offering was slain in the camp *before* it was burnt outside, whereas Christ fulfilled both these parts of the type by one act upon the cross outside. Again, the blood of the sin offering was taken into the holy of holies *before* the body was consumed by fire outside, whereas Christ entered the heavenly sanctuary "with his own blood" *after* he had suffered "without the gate." But the general significance of the symbolism in its several parts is not thus disturbed; it is viewed as a whole, and all

parts of it are found to be fulfilled. In saying, "we have an altar," and implying that we eat of it, the writer has surely the Eucharist in view, though it does not follow that *θυσιαστήριον* means definitely the table on which it is celebrated. He may, as some explain, have especially in his mind the cross on which the sacrifice was once for all completed; or he may have had no definite local image before him, seeing rather (as elsewhere in the Epistle) in spiritual realities and relations the counterparts of the Levitical symbols. But that the Holy Communion is alluded to, even if it were not apparent here, might be concluded from 1 Cor. x. 14—22, where similar phrases are used with distinct reference to it. There St. Paul is dissuading from participation in heathen sacrificial feasts, as being inconsistent with partaking of the Holy Communion; and he says in this connection, "Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices (*ἐσθιόντες τὰς θυσίας*) partakers of the altar (*κοινωνοὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου*)?" It is evident that "partakers of the Lord's table" (ver. 21) are regarded as being thereby partakers of the Christian altar, of which mention is made in the text before us. It may be observed that the use here of the word *θυσιαστήριον* may be held to justify—and this without implying any actual repetition of the one accomplished sacrifice—the application of the term "altar" to the table on which the Eucharist is celebrated, as does 1 Cor. x. 21 the term "the Lord's table." Both terms were so applied from very early times. The holy tables in our churches are altars, in that on them is continually commemorated and pleaded the one sacrifice of the cross, and that from them the spiritual food of the body and blood is given to the faithful.

Ver. 13.—Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. By a happy turn of thought Christ's having suffered without the gate is viewed as representing his exclusion from the Jewish Church and polity, outside which we are now to follow him, though we with him be reproached by the Jews as outcasts. There may be a tacit reference, such as Bengel sees in the word *φέροντες*, to our bearing our cross after him.

Ver. 14.—For here we have no abiding city, but we seek that which is to come; i.e. not Jerusalem, representing the transitory dispensation of the Law; but the "city of the living God," which is eternal.

Ver. 15.—Through him therefore let us offer the sacrifice (or, a sacrifice) of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips confessing to his Name. *θυσία αἰρέσως* is the designation in the ritual of the Law of the voluntary peace offering, offered by indi-

viduals on occasions calling for special thanksgiving (Lev. vii. 12). In the psalms it is used to express generally praise and thanksgiving (see Ps. l. 14, 23; cxvi. 17. *Θύσω τῷ Θεῷ θυσίαν αἰρέσως, καὶ δώσω τῷ ὀψιόν τὰς εὐχὰς σου*, etc.). In virtue of their participation in the true and complete Sin Offering, Christians may fulfil this part of the ancient symbolism, not occasionally, but "continually;" bringing to God, not fruits of the earth, but the "fruit of the lips" (an expression found in Hos. xiv. 2, where the LXX. has *καρδὸν χαλῶν ἡμῶν*), i.e. continual praise, springing from thankful hearts. In the Eucharist especially (hence so called) such sacrifice is continually offered, over the one atoning Sacrifice which is pleaded and partaken of. But not in communions only, but ever in their daily lives, such "sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving" is due. But, as the next verse reminds the readers, the "fruit of the lips" is not enough; there is a further sacrifice of our own, whereby we must show that we are true partakers of Christ, and truly thankful.

Ver. 16.—But to do good and to communicate forget not (*τῆς δὲ εὐοιδίας καὶ κοινωνίας μὴ ἐπιλανθάνεσθε*): where *εὐοιδίας* means "doing good to others" (cf. Mark xiv. 7); while *κοινωνίας* expresses the sense of Christian fellowship evinced by communicating to others a share of what we have; cf. Rom. xv. 26; 2 Cor. ix. 13): for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Ver. 17.—Obey them that have the rule over you (*τοῖς ἡγουμένοις ὑμῶν*, as in ver. 7), and submit yourselves (to them): for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief (literally, *groaning*); for that is (rather, were) unprofitable for you (i.e. their ministry is for your profit; if its result be their giving in their account with groans, its whole purpose will be frustrated). In this allusion to the *ἡγούμενοι*, as in vers. 7 and 24, there is evidence of the existence of a regular order of ministry in the Hebrew Churches, such as many allusions in St. Paul's Epistles show to have formed part of the constitution of the Churches to whom those Epistles were addressed (cf. also Acts xiv. 23 and xx. 17, 28, etc.). The word itself (*ἡγούμενοι*) which is here used might, indeed, denote any persons who took the lead in the congregations; but the urging of the duty of submission to them, in virtue of their office of watching for souls for which they would have to give account, shows plainly that a special order is here, as elsewhere, referred to. Observe also below, ver. 24, where "all the saints," i.e. what we should call the laity, are mentioned in distinction from the *ἡγούμενοι*. (For similar injunctions, cf. 1 Thess. v. 12 and 1 Tim. v. 17;

τοὺς προσευκόμενους ὑμῶν and οἱ προστάτες προσβότεροι being the words there used.) The special injunction here to obey and submit may have been called for by some deficiency in this respect among the Hebrew Christians. Possibly it was among the people rather than the pastors that there were any signs of wavering between the Church and the synagogue, and that one purpose of the admonition is to strengthen the hands of the former, in whom confidence is placed.

Ver. 18.—Pray for us: for we trust (rather, we are persuaded, *πεισόμεθα*) that we have a good conscience, in all things willing (i.e. desiring) to live honestly. When St. Paul uses the plural *ὑμεῖς* he usually at least, if not always, includes his colleagues (cf. 1 Thess. v. 25; 2 Thess. iii. 1; Col. iv. 3). So probably the writer here, especially as there is a transition to the singular in the following verse. Whoever he was, he associates himself in sending the Epistle with his fellow-labourers, i.e. with others of what we may call the Pauline circle, who were engaged with him elsewhere. Both this and the request for prayer, and also the assertion of integrity, which seems to imply suspicion of possible mistrust, are quite in St. Paul's way, and confirm the view that, though the author may not have been St. Paul himself, it was at any rate some one who was, or had been, closely connected with him.

Ver. 19.—And I beseech you the more abundantly (the Pauline word, *περισσότερον*) to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner. The author of the Epistle proceeds here for the first time to speak of himself individually; and what he thus says shows that the Epistle was addressed to some definite circle of Hebrew Christians, and one which he had been among before. What circumstances, whether of imprisonment or other hindrances, were in the way of his revisiting them does not appear. We remark that this verse again reminds us strongly of St. Paul (cf. Philem. 22). The possibility may be here noted (see Introduction, p. xli.) that, if the Epistle was composed by one of St. Paul's friends, and sent under his authority, he may have himself dictated this concluding portion (beginning possibly at ver. 17) which is in a more epistolary style than the rest, and contains personal allusions.

Vers. 20, 21.—Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through (literally, in) the blood of the eternal covenant, our Lord Jesus, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom (i.e. to God, the subject of the sentence) be glory for ever and ever.

Amen. It is St. Paul's way also to introduce, in the end of his Epistles, a solemn prayer or benediction, couched in terms suitable to the subjects that have been dwelt on (see e.g. Rom. xvi. 25, etc.). The term, "God of peace," is also usual with him; and it is appropriate here after so many warnings against disturbing the Church's peace; as is, with reference also to what has gone before, "make you perfect" (*καταρτίσαι*), and what follows. On "the great Shepherd," etc., Bengel says, "Habemus, inquit, antistites multos, ver. 17, sed hic omnium est Antistita. Ego sum abeas, ver. 19, sed Deus non abest, neque deerit." The expression is taken from Isa. lxi. 11, "Where is he that brought them out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? (Ποῦ ὁ ἀναβιβάσας ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης τὸν ποιμένα τῶν προβάτων; LXX.)" The reference in Isaiah is to Moses and the Red Sea, the well-known types of Christ and his resurrection, and of ours to a new life, leading to eternal life, through him. He is called "the great Shepherd," as in ch. iv. 14 the "great High Priest," as being the true fulfilment of the ancient types. "In [i.e. 'in virtue of'] the blood of the covenant" seems to be suggested by Zech. ix. 11, *καὶ σὺ ἐν αἵματι διαθήκης σου ἐκτίσεις τείλας δεσφίους σου ἐκ λάκκου οὐκ ἐχόντος ὕδατος*: *αἰώνιους* being added (as *ὑέων* before) to distinguish the new covenant from the old. The suitability of the words to the contents of the Epistle is obvious. It is observed that the above is the only distinct allusion in the Epistle to Christ's resurrection, the writer's treatment of his subject having led him to pass at once from the sacrifice to the heavenly intercession. But "non concludit apostolus, antequam mentionem fecerit resurrectionis Christi" (Bengel).

Ver. 22.—But I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words. This and the following verse are in the manner of a postscript, such as is usual with St. Paul. Some little apprehension is implied (cf. ver. 18) of the admonitions not being taken well by all. Though the Epistle is not short as compared with others, yet it has been compressed with as "few words" as the subject would allow (cf. ver. 11). If, however, this concluding portion of the Epistle was written or dictated by St. Paul himself, as suggested under ver. 19, the "few words" may possibly refer to it only.

Ver. 23.—Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you. This allusion to Timothy shows that the Epistle, whatever its exact date, was at any rate written in the apostolic age, before his death. Further, though not proving St. Paul's

authorship, it supports the conclusion that the writer, if not himself, was one of his associates, Timothy having been peculiarly his disciple and companion. It seems that Timothy had been, as the readers were aware, in prison; and the joyful news is communicated of his release, and of the prospect of his visiting them. This again shows that the *Epistle* was addressed to a definite circle of readers. It is observable that the word *ἀπολύεσθαι*, which does not occur in St. Paul's writings, is, like so many expressions throughout the *Epistle*, one usual with St. Luke (Luke xxii. 68; xxiii. 16, etc.; Acts iii. 13; iv. 21; where it expresses release from prison or captivity). He uses it also for dismissal of persons on a mission (Acts xiii. 8; xv. 80); and hence one view is that Timothy's having already set out to visit the Church addressed is all that is here meant. But the other meaning of the word is more likely.

Ver. 24.—Salute all them that have the rule over you (*τοῖς ἡγουμένοις*, as before), and all the saints. They of Italy salute you. The fact that no names are here mentioned, as is usual with St. Paul in sending salutations to Churches he was personally well

acquainted with, leads us to infer that there had been no such close association, at any rate recently, between the writer and the readers in this case; or else that a circle of Churches in some locality is addressed. Nothing certain can be concluded as to the writer's whereabouts at the time of writing from the expression, "they of Italy (*οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας*)," though it seems to favour the idea, rather than otherwise, that he was in Italy at the time, possibly at Rome. For the phrase means simply "natives of Italy" (cf. Acts x. 23; x. 38; xii. 1; xvii. 13; xxi. 27; xviii. 13; all these being, we observe, expressions of St. Luke's); it by no means implies that they had left Italy. In fact, as Delitzsch observes, "if the author was then in Italy, and at the same time was not a native of Italy, he could not have selected a more appropriate designation for the Italian Christians."

The *Epistle* is concluded by St. Paul's accustomed words, which, with some variations, seem to have been appended to all his letters as his authenticating autograph (see 2 Thess. iii., etc.).—

Ver. 25.—Grace be with you all. Amen.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Personal exhortations.* This book "to the Hebrews" begins like a doctrinal treatise; but it ends like a letter. Ch. xiii. is written quite in the epistolary form; and concludes with some personal notices—the only such that are to be found in the book. The verses before us contain counsels suited to the individual Christian life. Here the apostle says in effect to his readers—Be not *selfish* (vers. 1—3); be not *sensual* (ver. 4); be not *sordid* (vers. 5, 6).

I. AN EXHORTATION TO BROTHERLY LOVE. (Vers. 1—3.) In the New Testament, love of the brethren means love of the spiritual brotherhood of believers. The natural affection which subsists between brothers and sisters, although very sacred and beautiful, is not in itself Christian brotherly love. No more is patriotism, or love of country, a distinctively Christian sentiment. The brotherly love which the gospel inspires forgets all differences merely of kindred and nation. It is a spiritual bond, and unites the saint to all his fellow-believers everywhere. This love is not one of the things "that can be shaken" (ch. xii. 27); it "never faileth" (1 Cor. xiii. 8, 13). So, the apostle exhorts the Hebrews to make sure that it shall "remain" among themselves, and be as actively exercised in the future as in the past (ch. vi. 10). For, the spirit which rejoices to recognize fellow-believers—taking pleasure in their society, labouring to promote their welfare, and throwing the veil of charity over their failings—is one of the richest and ripest fruits of the Christian life. Love of the brethren is the cement of a congregation. And only the man who cherishes it is, in the proper meaning of the word, a gentleman. In vers. 2, 3, the apostle specifies two modes by which it is essential that brotherly love should be manifested; those, viz. of hospitality and sympathy. It is to be shown towards: 1. *Brethren who are strangers.* (Ver. 2.) The Christian Hebrews were to account it a sacred duty hospitably to entertain fellow-believers from other lands or districts, who might be travelling either on business, or in the service of the Church, or because driven from home by persecution. And not only a sacred duty, but a blessed privilege. For as Abraham and Lot (Gen. xviii., xix.) "entertained angels unawares," so the stranger whom the Christian receives may turn out to be a messenger from God to his soul—one whose presence may fill his house with the atmosphere of heaven. Should the stranger be a man whose mind is stored with

the treasures of spiritual truth, and whose affections are devout and pure, his visit may prove a means of direct quickening to the religious life of the household. Samuel Rutherford experienced this privilege, when one Saturday evening he received a stranger into his pleasant manse at Anworth; for after being impressed at the family catechizing with the guest's answer that the number of the commandments was *eleven*, the "new commandment" (John xiii. 34) being cited as proof, he discovered by-and-by that his visitor was Archbishop Usher, the learned and devout primate of the Church of Ireland. But another and a still sweeter thought is not remote from the motive to hospitality contained in this verse, viz. that in entertaining Christ's servants we are receiving the Master himself: "I was a Stranger, and ye took me in" (Matt. xxv. 35). 2. *Brethren who are sufferers.* (Ver. 3.) The Hebrews were to "remember" the saints who might be in prison. They were to do so "as bound with them;"—a beautiful expression, breathing the aroma of true Christian sympathy. They were to pray earnestly for them, if possible visit them, minister to their wants, and strive to secure their liberation. Brotherly kindness would lead them to conceive of themselves as occupying the position of the sufferers. It would cause them to realize the "bonds" of their brethren as an affliction personal to themselves, just as the elder Brother's love does (Acts ix. 4). But, since imprisonment is not the only calamity to which believers are exposed, the apostle proceeds to bespeak sympathy for all who in any way "are evil entreated," for Jesus' sake. We ourselves are liable to the same adversities which our brethren endure. Let us, therefore, identify ourselves with them. It is not enough that we contribute to public charities. Neither do we discharge all our duty when we employ some person as our proxy to care for the sufferers. True Christian sympathy requires that we bring ourselves into personal contact with them. Strength is often received from the glance of a sympathizing eye, or the grasp of a loving hand, or the utterance of a tender word of holy comfort.

II. A WARNING AGAINST IMPURITY. (Ver. 4.) The first part of this verse should certainly be translated as an exhortation. Marriage is to be "had in honour;" not so much here, however, as against celibacy, but in opposition to unchastity. The apostle in this precept elevates marriage to its rightful place as a Divine ordinance. The ethics of the New Testament magnify family life. The Christian religion, in honouring the family, guarding its rights, and proclaiming its duties, has invested home with a halo of loveliness. Wherever the sacred character of marriage is recognized and felt, the result will be purity. And, adds the apostle, there is judgment in reserve for those who dishonour God's ordinance in this matter. For the adulterer is guilty of the greatest of all social crimes, murder alone excepted. Whether, therefore, the breaker of the seventh commandment be a single or a married person, he shall not escape. The doom of impenitent sensualists will be none the less dreadful that the apostle does not here enlarge upon it. He feels it enough to say solemnly regarding such persons, "God will judge."

III. A DISSUASIVE AGAINST THE LOVE OF MONEY. (Vers. 5, 6.) Constantly in the New Testament sensuality and avarice are mentioned together as being sins of the same class (Mark vii. 21, 22; 1 Cor. v. 10; vi. 9, 10; Eph. v. 3; Col. iii. 5; 2 Pet. ii. 14). If sensuality hardens the human heart, sordidness does so also. The love of filthy lucre will drag a man down to perdition quite as readily and insidiously as the love of filthy lust. Avarice is often regarded as the national sin of the Hebrew race. The natural man Jacob is very prone to develop—unless Divine grace prevent—into the sordid, grasping Shylock. But the Anglo-Saxon nations are all powerfully predisposed to this sin too. In our own time how largely are riches over-estimated, both as a means of happiness and as an evidence of success in life! Even the Church of Christ is tempted to pay court to wealth. Yet it cannot be denied that the Saviour forbids his people to make it one of their chief aims to accumulate gold. We are to be diligent in business, and neither despise money nor set our hearts upon it. To be "content with present things" (ver. 5) is a high Christian attainment. And a man's habits of thought and life in connection with money are a touchstone of his character. "A right measure and manner in getting, saving, spending, giving, taking, lending, borrowing, and bequeathing, would almost argue a perfect man" (Henry Taylor). The apostle sustains his precept by an appeal to Scripture (ver. 5). The words quoted, "I will in no wise fail thee," etc., contain in the original no fewer than five negatives, and are thus, as it were,

a fivefold assurance of the Divine support. God gave this same promise to so many of the ancient saints—to Jacob, Joshua, Solomon, etc.—that it possesses the force of a spiritual adage, and thus may be personally appropriated by every believer. In all ages thousands of the people of God have rested on it, and have accordingly exemplified the rare and difficult grace of contentment. This is matter of history and of observation.

“O earth, so full of dreary noises!
O men, with wailing in your voices!
O delvèd gold, the wallers heap!
O strife, O curse, that o’er it fall!
God strikes a silence through you all,
And giveth his belovèd sleep.”

(Mrs. Browning.)

Seeing, then, that we who believe are assured of the Divine presence and help, why should we not have the “good courage” (ver. 6) to say with the psalmist, “I will not fear: what shall man do unto me” (Ps. cxviii. 6)? Avarice has its root in want of faith in God; but no one who is persuaded that the Lord is with him need dread any kind of poverty. Having Jehovah for his Champion, he will not “make gold his hope, or say to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence.” Divine grace will root up out of his heart the noxious weed of covetousness, and plant in its room the fair and fragrant flower of contentment.

Vers. 7, 8.—*Deceased pastors.* Passing from admonitions bearing upon the individual Christian life, the writer now proceeds to exhort the brethren about matters arising out of their Church relations. He charges them to cherish the memory of their departed Christian teachers.

I. THE WORK OF THE PASTORATE. The duties of the gospel ministry, when these are faithfully discharged, may be said to be threefold. 1. *To bear rule over the Church.* Christ has given to his Church the “power of the keys,” vesting it in her pastors and presbyters. This power, however, is simply ministerial. The rulers of the Church merely administer the laws given by the Lord Jesus Christ, her King and Head. While at liberty to frame bye-laws which may promote the edifying celebration of the ordinances which he has founded, they dare not prescribe new laws or appoint new ordinances. They are to admit to Church communion and exclude from it; but only upon the lines laid down in the New Testament. 2. *To speak the Word of God.* The main function of the ministry is to preach the gospel, and to teach Christian truth. The gospel is a definite “word;” and it is enshrined in a Book which is called “The Word.” The preacher’s text-book is not the newspaper, or the current literature of the day, but “the oracles of God.” The great design of the Christian pulpit is to promote the intellectual and experimental knowledge of the Bible. And no minister “shall have lived in vain if it can be written over his grave, ‘He made the people understand the Scriptures.’” (Dr. John Hall). 3. *To live a consistent Christian life.* When a pastor is, like Barnabas, “a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith,” it is to be expected that “much people will be added unto the Lord” (Acts xi. 24). A holy example lends incalculable momentum to Christian teaching. “The life of a pious minister is visible rhetoric” (Hooker).

“To draw mankind to heaven by gentleness
And good example, was his business. . .
And Jesus’ love, which owns no pride or pelf,
He taught; but first he followed it himself.”

(Chaucer.)

II. THE DUTY OF BELIEVERS TOWARDS THEIR DECEASED PASTORS. Although these are removed from us, we still have duties towards them. Indeed, the relationship of pastor and people, being spiritual in its nature, may be said to be prolonged into eternity. We must: 1. *Remember their official work.* We should recall the strain of their Christian teaching, and think with gratitude of their spiritual supervision. If we continue to “esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work’s sake,” they “being dead, shall yet speak” to us. Many a believer feels that he has had one

spiritual guide in particular whose influence over his heart and life must continue unaffected by change or time; viz. the pastor under whose ministry he was converted, or whose teaching helped most powerfully to mould his Christian thought and give direction to his spiritual energies. 2. *Consider their consistent Christian life.* When a man's career is finished, it can be surveyed as a whole, and its moral worth appraised. So the character of a godly minister comes to be appreciated at its full value only when we are in a position to "consider the issue of his life." The early spiritual guides of the Hebrews had all died in faith; and some of them, it may be (e.g. Stephen, James the son of Zebedee, and James the Little), had obtained the crown of martyrdom. And what an evidence still of the truth of Christianity is the blameless, unselfish, beneficent career, continued through perhaps two generations, of a faithful Christian minister! What a magnificent sunset the close of the life of the pastor who can say upon his death-bed, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. iv. 7)! 3. *Imitate their holy fidelity.* These primitive pastors had been sorely tried; yet they had never swerved from their loyalty to Christ and to his truth. Like the heroes of the old dispensation, whose exploits are recounted in ch. xi., they had "lived by faith." Why, then, should any of the members of the Church, whom they had taught, be guilty of apostasy? Those doctrines of grace which the teachers had held fast were surely worthy of the adherence of the disciples. Let us also continue steadfastly in the pure gospel truth which our departed spiritual guides adorned in their lives, and let us copy their holy and persevering fidelity to the Redeemer.

III. A BLESSED ENCOURAGEMENT TO DISCHARGE THIS DUTY. Ver. 8 is to be read as an affirmation: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday," etc. It expresses the glorious thought of the changelessness of the Redeemer. He is ever the same in his Divine nature, in his true humanity, in his mediatorial power, in his love and tenderness, in his gospel and its promises. More particularly here he is immutable: 1. *As the theme of the pulpit.* The preacher of the gospel dies, but "the Word of God" which he spoke is immortal. That Word has its focus in the person and work of the Saviour. Its central fact is the death of Christ. The backbone of evangelical preaching is the scheme of redemption by him. And the singular vitality of the pulpit, as compared with other institutions—as, e.g. schools of philosophy, scientific societies, commercial guilds—is due to this undying theme; undying, because coeval with the deepest needs of men in all time. We should, then, remember those who "spoke the Word of God," because the Word which they spoke is indestructible. 2. *As the confidence of the saints.* The apostolic missionaries who had first preached to the Hebrews had made Jesus Christ their own Stay during life, and their "Guide even unto death." It was he who had succoured them under all their afflictions and persecutions as ministers of the Word. And, although they were now dead, the same Saviour still lived. It was fitted to be a powerful stimulus to the Hebrews to imitate the faithfulness of their ministers, that the immutable Redeemer remains for ever with his people; and that they, too, could link their souls with him, and share in his immutability. 3. *As the perpetual Pastor of the Church.* The under-shepherds are taken away, but the chief Shepherd abides. Each of them was one of his "gifts for men," lent only for a season. But the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ himself is perennial and inexhaustible. During the "yesterday" of the Jewish dispensation he made his sheep "to lie down in green pastures" (Ps. xxiii. 2). During the "to-day" of the Christian dispensation he presides over his flock by his Spirit, "that they may have life, and may have it abundantly" (John x. 10). And, during the blessed "for ever" which shall begin with the second coming, when all his sheep shall have been gathered from their various folds into the infinite meadows of heaven, "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their Shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life" (Rev. vii. 17).

Vers. 9—16.—"*Without the camp.*" These words occur repeatedly in this passage; and, used as a motto, they express appropriately the nerve-thought which pervades it. Indeed, the entire Epistle may be described as an urgent and affectionate exhortation to the Hebrews to "go forth unto Jesus without the camp, bearing his reproach." We are required to withdraw from the polity and life of Judaism—

I. AS REGARDS DOCTRINE. (Ver. 9.) The reference here seems to be to the

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Levitical distinctions between clean and unclean "meats," and perhaps also to the traditional customs on the same subject which had been elevated to equal authority with those. The apostle reminds his readers that all such precepts are only "carnal ordinances," which the coming of Jesus Christ has rendered no longer necessary, and the observance of which can now have no influence upon a man's spiritual life. Christ has "made all meats clean" (Mark vii. 19). The principle and power of his religion consists in "grace," and not in fanciful distinctions connected with food. "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking" (Rom. xiv. 17). No consciousness of external observances can ever "profit" a man spiritually. Only the "grace" of God, given by his Spirit, can regenerate and ennoble the human soul. We must therefore forsake the materialistic "teachings" of Judaism for the spiritual doctrines of Christianity.

II. AS REGARDS OUR SIN OFFERING. (Vers. 10—13.) Our "Altar" is Christ (ver. 10), and he is also our Sacrifice "for sin" (ver. 12). He is at once High Priest, Altar, and Victim. Under the Levitical law, while the priests were allowed to partake of many of the sacrifices, there were certain sin offerings of which they were expressly forbidden to eat (Lev. vi. 30). Those, e.g. which were presented on the great annual Day of Atonement were wholly consumed by fire "without the camp." This ordinance typified the fact that Christ, the true Sin Offering, was to suffer for us "without the gate" of Jerusalem; and that, if we would participate in the atonement which he has made, we must voluntarily renounce the Jewish Church from which he was expelled. The law of the tabernacle forbade those who remained in connection with the camp of Judaism to eat of the flesh of any sin offering the blood of which had been presented within the tabernacle; but every one who worships before the true altar which has been set up on Calvary is encouraged freely to partake of the flesh of Christ, which he has "given for the life of the world." To cleave to the Law, therefore, is to reject the gospel. If we would eat of the real sin offering which has been provided under the new covenant—i.e. obtain the blessings of pardon and peace, of access and sanctification, which the atonement of Jesus has purchased—we must "go forth unto him without the camp."

III. AS REGARDS OUR THANK OFFERINGS. (Vers. 15, 16.) These are not to be presented any longer through the medium of the Aaronical priesthood and of the Levitical oblations. Christ's people are to offer them "through him" as Mediator, and depending for their acceptance upon his atonement and intercession. So soon as we partake of the New Testament sin offering, we are ourselves constituted "a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. ii. 5). The great substantive thank offering which the believer presents is himself (Rom. xii. 1; 2 Cor. viii. 5). But the man who has given himself to the Lord will also offer: 1. *Words of praise*. (Ver. 15.) The most direct means by which we can honour God is publicly to "make confession to his Name" in words of faith and songs of adoration. When the spirit of praise takes root within the soil of the heart, it will spread its buds and blossoms over all the soul, and adorn the "lips" with its "fruit." 2. *Works of piety*. (Ver. 16.) These are spiritual sacrifices also. Christianity is eminently a practical religion, and regards every deed of charity done for Jesus' sake as a sweet and holy psalm. The truly grateful heart is always generous, and "willing to communicate" for the relief of brethren who are in need. And "God is well pleased" with every act of beneficence done out of gratitude for his grace. He accepts such as a "sacrifice" offered to himself.

IV. AS REGARDS OUR SPIRITUAL CITIZENSHIP. (Ver. 14.) Very soon, now, Jerusalem and its temple were to be razed to their foundations; and the entire Jewish polity, both civil and ecclesiastical, thus to be brought to a perpetual end. But that event would entail but small loss upon the Christian Hebrews, if only they remained steadfast in the faith. For, in embracing the gospel, they had transferred their affections from the earthly Jerusalem to the heavenly. Not only so, but all believers—Jew and Gentile alike—must "go forth unto Jesus without the camp," in the sense of living a life of separation from the prevailing spirit of the world. The believer is to cultivate habits of reserve in reference to earthly pursuits and interests. His "citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. iii. 20). He looks beyond even the kingdom of grace to that of glory.

He knows that the whole visible order of things in this world shall pass away, and just as completely as the Jewish polity has already done. And he anticipates for himself a permanent home in the New Jerusalem that shall "come down out of heaven from God."

CONCLUSION. Seeing we possess such transcendent privileges "outside the camp," let us bear patiently the "reproach" of Christ. We must be content to appear "singular" for his sake. We must be willing to be ostracized by the world on account of our love for him. The spirit of devotion to Jesus will be always diametrically opposed to the prevailing spirit of the ungodly. But what an honour to be permitted to suffer with him! And "if we endure, we shall also reign with him."

Vers. 17—19.—Duty to present pastors. In ver. 7 the apostle had exhorted the Hebrews to honour the memory of their deceased ministers. But, if this was a duty incumbent on them, it was equally their duty to render Christian obedience to their living spiritual guides. These precepts connected with the pastoral relation remind us that even in the earliest times the Churches possessed a definite organization, and were presided over by regularly appointed spiritual office-bearers. A twofold duty towards their leaders is pointed out in these verses.

I. TO OBEY THEM. (Ver. 17.) The spiritual government of the Church is an ordinance of Christ, and a means of grace to his people. It is not, however, a despotic government. Pastors and presbyters are simply to administer the Law of Christ. They may not demand submission to what is based only upon their own will or caprice. But, within the limits of their rightful authority, they are to be honoured and obeyed. Their public teaching is to be received with a view to personal edification. Their private pastoral admonitions are to be accepted as "an excellent oil" (Pa. cxli. 5). The censures of the Church, administered after conviction of scandalous sin, are to be submitted to, not as a penance, but as a means of spiritual benefit. The exhortation of this verse is needed in our own time. The present age is characterized not only by a healthy independence of thought, but also by an unhealthy impatience of legitimate authority—at once in the family, in the state, and in the Church. Yet there must be both government and discipline in every ecclesiastical society; and the proper administration of such is indispensable to the order and purity of the Church, if not even to her visible existence. In the latter part of the verse some reasons and motives are presented by which to enforce this duty of obedience in spiritual things. 1. *The solemn work of the pastor.* He "watches in behalf of your souls." If the Church ruler be worthy of his office, he will be full of vigilant solicitude for the salvation of the people whom the Lord Jesus has committed to his care. He will take trouble for their souls. He will seek to know the flock personally—their individual condition, character, and needs. He will try to establish true sympathy between himself and them. He will watch, that he may teach and warn and comfort with a view to their salvation. 2. *His responsibility to the chief Shepherd.* Every minister knows that he "shall give account." In his private communion with his Master he ought from time to time to report to him upon the condition of his charge. And he must not forget that at the end of the days, when the Son of man shall separate the sheep from the goats, he shall address to him the solemn question, "Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?" (Jer. xiii. 20). 3. *The hurtful recoil upon the souls of the people if they fail in obedience.* A spirit of docility in the congregation will encourage its spiritual guides to do their responsible work with cheerfulness and joy. But when there is resistance to counsel and contumacy under discipline, the heart of the pastor will become cast down; he will be prone to feel his work irksome, and to do it "with grief," if indeed he be not tempted to abandon it altogether. And such a frame of mind in him will react in turn upon the congregation. A dejected minister will be more or less inefficient. The people will suffer much spiritual loss, for which they can only have themselves to blame.

II. TO PRAY FOR THEM. (Vers. 18, 19.) In the verse preceding, the apostle has had in view the anxieties and burdens of the Christian ministry; so he now requests the prayers of the Hebrews for the pastors of the Church, and specially for himself. Here, for the first time in the course of this Epistle, the author—whoever he was—allows his personality to appear. He claims to stand in a pastoral relation to the Hebrews, not

only on the ground of former intercourse, but in virtue of this letter, which he has weighted with precious instruction and affectionate appeal. Now, if apostles and inspired men felt the need of the intercessions of the Church, how earnestly ought she to pray for her ordinary pastors and teachers! And a congregation should not only implore Divine grace for "our beloved pastor"—a duty which is sometimes done in a spirit of parochial selfishness; we should also embrace in our intercessions the ministers of all the congregations with which we are associated in Church fellowship, and all the Lord's servants in the gospel everywhere. The writer advances two considerations in support of his request. 1. *His purity of conduct.* (Ver. 18.) He had the testimony of "a good conscience;" and yet he yearned for the sympathy of his brethren in all his labours and sufferings. Jewish zealots might asperse his motives and defame his character; but the prayers of his fellow-Christians would fortify him against such trials. And the Church ought still to pray for her godly pastors, that they may have grace "to live honestly in all things," preserving "a good conscience" in keeping their own hearts, in maintaining habits of study, in faithfully preaching the gospel, and in watching for souls by means of pastoral work. 2. *His desire to revisit the Christian Hebrews.* (Ver. 19.) The writer had resided among them at some former period, and he strongly wished to return to them so soon as circumstances might permit. He solicits their prayers, that the hindrances presently in his way may be removed. He makes this request very earnestly, and as a great personal favour to himself. We are reminded here, accordingly, that prayer is one of the powers which co-operate in the government of the world. The author of this Epistle was persuaded that the almighty energy of God is roused into action by the supplications of his people. He was quite sure that human prayers, not less than human deeds, are a factor in the Divine government. So he begged that the "voice" of the Church might "rise like a fountain for him night and day."

Vers. 20, 21.—*Concluding prayer for the Hebrews.* The apostle, having earnestly requested the prayers of the Christian Jews for himself, proceeds to plead for them at the throne of the heavenly grace. He virtually says, "Pray for me, brethren; I pray for you." And what a wonderful prayer is this! How brief, yet how comprehensive; how exquisitely simple, yet how deeply sublime! It is a benediction as well as a petition. And it is so richly coloured with the doctrine which the writer has been discussing that it reads almost like a summary of the Epistle. Consider—

I. THE TITLE UNDER WHICH GOD IS ADDRESSED. "The God of peace." This is a Pauline expression. Outside of this book it occurs only in the writings of Paul. The appellation is profoundly suggestive. God is "the God of peace" (1) in his own being and character—he loves peace, and it dwells within him; (2) in his moral administration, the end of which is to work peace in the world, and within the hearts of men. These Hebrews lived during a time of political turmoil and of religious persecution; but the apostle directs their thoughts to the Lord that "sitteth upon the flood," who "will bless his people with peace." There are some very solemn and terrible passages in this Epistle about the sin and doom of apostates; but the writer points us once more to the rainbow of grace shining in front of the gloom, and tells us how the hands of "the God of peace" have bended it.

II. THE SPECIAL REDEMPTIVE ACT HERE CELEBRATED. It is that of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus—an event not referred to elsewhere in the Epistle. The God who works peace had sent his Son to obey and suffer and die for man's sin; and the same God had brought him again from the dead, and confirmed him in his high dignity as "the great Shepherd of the sheep." Throughout this prayer of benediction the writer seems to have in view Isa. lxi. 11—14, and to think of the Lord Jesus by contrast with Moses, and the other shepherds of ancient Israel. Jacob and Joseph, Moses and Aaron, Samuel and David, had all been true "shepherds of his flock;" but the Lord Jesus is "the great Shepherd." The Hebrews were to cherish the memory of their own former pastors (ver. 7), and they had other pastors set over them now (ver. 17); but the Lord Jesus, the crucified and risen One, was ever their chief Pastor. He had laid down his life as "the good Shepherd," but in rising from the dead and ascending to heaven he had shown himself to be "the great Shepherd." On every account he is entitled to be called "great;" e.g. because all the prophets spoke of him, because all former true

shepherds were types of him, because he is himself mighty to save, and because of the vastness of the flock over which he shall preside. Here in particular, however, the apostle calls him "great" because he has sealed the new and "eternal covenant" with his "blood." That blood was the blood of God himself (Acts xx. 28); and so the covenant confirmed with such a costly sacrifice cannot but be everlasting. Not only so, but the Lord Jesus died, not merely as a federal offering; he died as a Sin Offering. His death completed the fulfilment of the covenant stipulations on his and our part; and, as we know that God also will be faithful to the treaty on his side, we are sure it shall stand for ever. Christ is "the Mediator of the new covenant" and "the great Shepherd of the sheep," through virtue of the merit of his blood.

III. THE SPIRITUAL BLESSING PRAYED FOR. (Ver. 21.) It is the gift of perfect sanctification, a blessing that had been expressly promised and guaranteed in connection with the new covenant (Jer. xxxi. 33, 34). The God who has elevated the Lord Jesus to be the Head of the final dispensation is both able and willing to perform his own covenant promise. "Make you perfect;" i.e. put you into order, restore you, equip you. Naturally, every man needs to have his soul reorganized before he can learn to do God's will. And sometimes a good man requires, as many of these Hebrew believers did, a second conversion. The apostle prays that their equipment may be thorough; that it may be a deep and comprehensive work within the soul, wrought there by the power of the Holy Ghost, and which shall bear fruit outwardly in a career of perfect holiness that shall be "well-pleasing in God's sight." It is not enough to practise only some of the virtues of the Christian character; we must be "perfect in every good thing"—in worship and work, in thought and feeling, in body and spirit. The rule of our perfect equipment is "his will"—the mind of God as made known to us in Holy Scripture. And the medium by which it is accomplished is "through Jesus Christ"—by means of his gracious operations upon the heart by his Spirit. Perfect holiness in man is all of his creation: not by his doctrine merely, or by faith in him; but through himself, and by virtue of the believer's union to him.

IV. THE DOXOLOGY WITH WHICH THE PRAYER CLOSES. "To whom"—i.e. as we take it, to "the God of peace" who is addressed in the prayer. And yet, when "the glory" is ascribed to him, it is given to all the three Divine Persons—to God the Father, who "brought again our Lord Jesus from the dead;" to God the Son, "the great Shepherd of the sheep" and Mediator of "the eternal covenant;" and to God the Spirit, the executive of the Deity, who personally "worketh in us" and "makes us perfect." This doxology is the language of spiritual instinct; and, being such, it is irrepressible. So soon as any human heart really apprehends that Jehovah is "the God of peace," and feels grateful for his unspeakable gift of "the great Shepherd," and accepts the blessings of "the eternal covenant," and becomes conscious of the transforming influence of grace within itself,—how is that heart to be restrained from breaking forth into adoring praise, and from uttering the desire that the Divine glory should be universal and eternal? May our souls be in such full sympathy with this prayer of benediction as to join with emphasis in the apostle's rapturous and fervent "Amen"!

Vers. 22—25.—*Last words.* If the previous part of this chapter is of the nature of a postscript, these closing verses seem to be a second and briefer postscript appended to the first. The apostle's loving heart lingers fondly over the close of the letter, and prolongs its last words.

I. HE CRAVES A KINDLY RECEPTION FOR THE EPISTLE. (Ver. 22.) Although his book is an inspired message, he does not urge its Divine authority as the reason why it should be carefully studied. He rather solicits the Hebrews as his "brethren," and "for love's sake," to "bear with the word of exhortation." It is interesting to mark the description of the book which is thus given by its author. The theologian deals with it as a profound theological treatise; the expositor regards it as the New Testament counterpart of the Book of Leviticus; but the writer himself calls it simply a "word of exhortation." But when we study the structure of the Epistle, we find that this description, although modest, is most appropriate. What is often spoken of as the doctrinal part (ch. i. 1—x. 18) is itself full also of earnest expostulations and warnings; and these but prepare the way for the prolonged and solemn practical appeal of the

closing chapters (x. 19 to the end). The Epistle was written for the purpose of pressing upon its readers the duty of unflinching loyalty to Christ. "The key-note of it is struck and heard throughout in the hortatory parts, to which the doctrinal elements are subservient" (Dr. A. B. Davidson). The apostle might have enforced his request in this verse by many weighty reasons; but he mentions only one, viz. the brevity of the Epistle. He had written "in few words"—few, as compared with (1) the extent and importance of the subject; (2) his own burning interest in it, which would have made it easy for him to dilate; (3) the gravity of the crisis in relation to the spiritual life of the Hebrews. But he had rigorously condensed his matter, that his readers might not be deterred from the study of the Epistle, or their patience exhausted before the close of the argument. It was desirable that when it should be read aloud in their Churches—a task which would occupy less than an hour—the last words of it should leave the people longing rather than loathing. And what a marvel of condensation is this book to the Hebrews! During the preparation of these homilies, the writer has had his conviction of the plenary inspiration of the Epistle greatly deepened,—especially in view of its wealth of holy thought, its lucid expositions and arguments, its rhetorical splendour, its singular spiritual elevation, and its living power to pierce the heart and conscience. What a blank there would have been in Holy Scripture had this book, which is the key to the entire Levitical system, been excluded from the canon! Had such a calamity been allowed to happen, the New Testament would have been utterly silent about the priesthood of Christ—this great theme being dealt with exclusively in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

II. HE SENDS KINDLY TIDINGS AND GREETINGS. (Vers. 23, 24.) Cheering news is given about Timothy; he "hath been set at liberty." The expression seems to imply that this beloved spiritual "son" of Paul had been in prison and had been discharged. It was the writer's intention, should Timothy and he meet, that the two should together visit the Hebrews. (This reference to Timothy, as well as the salutations in ver. 24, have been eagerly canvassed by commentators, in their vain endeavours to arrive at certainty regarding the author of the Epistle, the place of its composition, and the Churches to which it was addressed.) The apostle's greetings are sent through the members to the spiritual rulers, as if to remind us that it is the members of congregations that constitute the Church, and not their pastors alone. Still, the apostle is careful to give honour to the office-bearers: he has already exhorted the people to "obey" them (ver. 17), and now he sends his farewell salutation first to them. "They of Italy" refers to the greetings of Italian brethren; but it cannot be determined from the words whether the Epistle was sent from Italy or to Italy. Such Christian courtesies as those of ver. 24 are not to be dismissed as mere formalities. They remind us of the duty of loving our brethren in the Lord everywhere. Spiritual love is international. It is cosmopolitan. Wherever Christians are, our hearts should warm to them. Salutations like those before us derive their value (1) from the character of the sender, and (2) from their substance. Here we have the affectionate messages of a great apostle, or at least of an eminent apostolical man—the author of one of the noblest of the Epistles of the New Testament. And his greetings are not empty compliments. He has shown himself on every page of his letter to be deeply in earnest, and to have a heart brimful of loving solicitude for the souls of those to whom he writes. Let us learn, accordingly, the duty of courtesy and kindness in our Christian intercourse. "As ye enter into the house, salute it" (Matt. x. 12).

III. HE CLOSES WITH THE PAULINE BENEDICTION. (Ver. 25.) The same form of blessing is used by Paul at the close of every one of his thirteen letters; and, apparently because Paul had already appropriated this form, none of the other writers of New Testament Epistles conclude with any expression which is at all similar. This fact seems to corroborate the opinion that this anonymous Epistle is to be ascribed to the Apostle Paul, so far as regards the authorship of its thoughts, and although it may have received its literary form from another mind and hand. The final adieu is brief; but it could not be richer or more comprehensive. The word "grace" expresses the sum of all blessing, both temporal and spiritual. The author desires for his dear readers grace of every kind—efficacious grace, preventing grace, co-operating grace, habitual grace. For grace blesses with pardon. It purifies from sin. It comforts amid sorrow. It strengthens for duty. And it will at length ripen into glory.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*Brotherly love.* "Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to," etc. The writer now proceeds to exhort his readers to the practice of sundry Christian virtues. He begins by enjoining the maintenance and manifestation of brotherly love.

I. THE MAINTENANCE OF BROTHERLY LOVE. "Let brotherly love continue." 1. *That this affection existed* is implied. That it had been exercised in former times is clear from ch. x. 32—34. That it was existent and active at the time when this Epistle was written appears from ch. vi. 10. 2. *That this affection was imperilled* is also implied. There are several things which may check the growth and extinguish the life of brotherly love. (1) Diversity of opinion. We are each gifted with individuality; we sometimes look at things from different standpoints; we arrive at different conclusions. This is the case in the interpretation of the sacred Scriptures, and in other matters. Differences of opinion sometimes lead to differences of feeling, to coldness and estrangement. (2) Diversity of gifts. The great Master gives to one man five talents, to another two, and to another one. There is danger that pride in those of superior gifts, or envy in those who are less gifted, may crush this holy affection. (3) Misunderstandings may arise amongst Christian brethren and blight their love of each other. 3. *That this affection should be maintained.* "Let brotherly love continue." Let it remain. Guard against those things which endanger its existence. Cherish it. This love of the brethren is not to be limited to those who belong to the same ecclesiastical community, or to those who hold the same views of Christian doctrine; it should embrace all the disciples of the Lord Jesus. "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in uncorruptness." The importance of maintaining this affection is manifest from many Divine utterances (John xiii. 34, 35; xv. 12, 17; 1 John iii. 11, 14—18; iv. 7, 8, 11, 20, 21).

II. THE MANIFESTATION OF BROTHERLY LOVE. Two forms in which this affection should be expressed are adduced in our text. 1. *Hospitality towards strangers.* "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Consider: (1) The duty. Hospitality is frequently enjoined and commended in the Bible (Matt. x. 40—42; xxv. 34—46; Luke x. 4—7; Rom. xii. 13; 1 Tim. iii. 2; Titus i. 8; 1 Pet. iv. 9). "The primitive Christians," says Calmet, "considered one principal part of their duty to consist in showing hospitality to strangers. They were, in fact, so ready in discharging this duty, that the very heathen admired them for it. They were hospitable to all strangers, but especially to those who were of the household of faith. Believers scarcely ever travelled without letters of communion, which testified the purity of their faith, and procured for them a favourable reception wherever the Name of Jesus Christ was known." In the parable of the good Samaritan the great Teacher presented to his disciples a perfect example of Christian hospitality. (2) The motive by which we are encouraged to perform this duty. "For thereby some have entertained angels unawares." There is a reference to Abraham (Gen. xviii.) and to Lot (Gen. xix.). Many a guest has proved as an angel to his entertainers, brightening the home by his presence, and leaving behind him precious memories and saving influences. The kindness we have shown to strangers has often come back to us with compound interest, and in higher and holier forms. Therefore, "forget not to show love unto strangers." 2. *Sympathy towards sufferers.* "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body." Notice two points: (1) The obligation. "Remember them," etc. All who are distressed should be remembered tenderly, sympathized with heartily, and succoured as far as opportunity will allow. "Weep with them that weep." "Bear ye one another's burdens," etc. (2) The consideration presented as an incitement to the fulfilment of this obligation. "As being yourselves also in the body." We are not beyond the reach of persecution or distress. We may be called to suffer as some of our Christian brethren are now suffering, and then we should need the sympathy which they now require. Here is a beautiful example of this sympathy. "Thomas Samson was a working miner, and working hard for his bread. The captain of the mine said to him on one occasion, 'Thomas, I've got an easier berth for you, where there is compara-

tively little to do, and where you can earn more money. Will you accept it?' What do you think he said? 'Captain, there's our poor brother Tregoney. He has a sick body, and he is not able to work as hard as I am. I fear his toil will shorten his useful life. Will you let him have the berth?' The captain, pleased with his generosity, sent for Tregoney, and gave him the berth. Thomas was gratified, and added, 'I can work a little longer yet.'—W. J.

Ver. 5.—*Christian contentment enjoined and encouraged.* "Let your conversation be without covetousness," etc. Our subject naturally falls into two main branches.

I. THE DUTY TO WHICH WE ARE SUMMONED. This duty is here stated negatively and positively. 1. *Freedom from the love of money.* "Let your conversation be without covetousness." Revised Version, "Be ye free from the love of money." This is a sin to which many are very prone, and the descendants of Jacob, to some of whom this letter was addressed, as much, or perhaps more so, than others. It is an exceedingly insidious and perilous sin. It does not carry any outward and visible stigma, as some sins do. They who are guilty of it may be respectable in appearance, maintain a good reputation in society, and retain their position in the communion of the Christian Church, while the vigour and health and even the very life of their Christian character are being subtly consumed by it. There is no sin more destructive of spiritual life, or more fatal to the highest and divinest things in man. It quenches the nobler aspirations of the soul. It degrades the soul itself until, oblivious of its high calling, and looking simply upon material or perishable possessions, man says, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry." And it is the prolific parent of other sins, "the root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim. vi. 10). Let us endeavour to be free from this ensnaring and destructive sin. 2. *Contentment with present possessions.* "Be content with such things as ye have." Ward Beecher says well, "It is not to be the content of indifference, of indolence, of unambitious stupidity, but the content of industrious fidelity. When men are building the foundations of vast structures, they must needs labour far below the surface and in disagreeable conditions. But every course of stone which they lay raises them higher; and at length, when they reach the surface, they have laid such solid rock under them that they need not fear now to carry up their walls, through towering stories, till they overlook the whole neighbourhood. A man proves himself fit to go higher who shows that he is faithful where he is. A man that will not do well in his present place because he longs to be higher, is fit neither to be where he is nor yet above it: he is already too high, and should be put lower." When we consider how few our real needs are, we may well cultivate contentment "with such things as we have." "Having food and raiment, let us therewith be content." And contentment is blessed. It softens our privations and sweetens our provisions. "Contentment will make a cottage look as fair as a palace. He is not a poor man that hath but little, but he is a poor man that wants much." In St. Paul we have an illustrious example of this virtue: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content," etc. (Phil. iv. 11—13). Like him, let us seek to learn this lesson completely, and to practise this virtue constantly "in him that strengtheneth" us.

II. THE FACT BY WHICH WE ARE ENCOURAGED TO FULFIL THIS DUTY. "For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." These exact words do not occur in the sacred Scriptures; but the sentiment is frequently expressed therein (cf. Deut. xxxi. 6; Josh. i. 5; 1 Chron. xxviii. 20). Extraordinary is the emphasis of expression in this assurance. No less than five negatives are employed by the writer to give force to this one brief yet blessed promise. The argument of the text is this, that the abiding presence of God with us is a sufficient reason for contentment. It is so because his presence guarantees: 1. *The supply of all our need.* We have all things in him; e.g.: (1) Provision (Ps. lxxxiv. 11; Matt. vi. 25—34). (2) Protection (Ps. cxxi. 1; Rom. viii. 31; 1 Pet. iii. 13). (3) Guidance (Ps. lxxiii. 23, 24; Prov. iii. 5, 6). "My God shall fully supply every need of yours, according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." 2. *The sanctification of our portion.* His gracious presence will sweeten the poorest fare, and cheer the most depressed condition, and exalt the lowliest circumstances. To his faithful suffering servants his presence transformed a loathsome dungeon into a palace beautiful (Acts xvi. 24, 25). It is stated that Seneca said to

Polybius, "Never complain of thy hard fortune so long as Cæsar is thy friend." How much more may we say to every true Christian, "Never complain of such things as you have so long as you have God for your Portion" !

"The rich man in his wealth confides,
But in my God my trust abides.
Laugh as ye will, I hold
This one thing fast that he hath taught:
Who trusts in God shall want for naught.

Yes, Lord : thou art as rich to-day
As thou hast been, and shall be aye;
I rest on thee alone.
Thy riches to my soul be given,
And 'tis enough for earth and heaven !"

(Hans Sachs.)

W. J.

Ver. 6.—*A triumphant assurance.* "So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper," etc. The writer in our text adopts the language of Ps. cxviii. 6. Three distinct, yet closely related topics for meditation are suggested.

I. MAN'S NEED OF HELP. What a dependent creature is man! Mark this in the different stages of his life. 1. How utterly helpless *in infancy*! 2. How needy *in youth*! Instruction, direction, counsel, support, are indispensable to youthful life, if it is to grow into usefulness unto men and acceptability unto God. 3. How dependent *in manhood*! No one is independent. Even the wealthiest, the wisest, the mightiest, cannot stand alone. We need help (1) from each other. "We are members one of another." "The members should have the same care one for another" (cf. 1 Cor. xiii.) We need help (2) from God. "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; . . . for in him we live, and move, and have our being." It was truly said by Fenélon, "God has but to withdraw his hand which bears us, to plunge us back into the abyss of our nothingness, as a stone suspended in the air falls by its own weight the moment it ceases to be held." 4. How imbecile *in old age*! This is often a "second childhood," a season of almost complete dependence upon others both physically and mentally. 5. *There are times, when man specially feels his need of help.* In affliction we feel our need of patience; in sorrow, of consolation; in perplexity, of guidance, etc.

II. GOD'S PROVISION OF HELP. God has put it into our hearts to help each other. Many are the ways in which this is done; e.g. by sympathy, by counsel, by gifts, etc. But God himself is the great Helper. A helper does not do everything for us. He supplements our weakness with his strength; our ignorance and inexperience with his wisdom. We must do our part, and he will not fail in his. Consider what a glorious Helper God is. 1. *He is all-sufficient.* His wisdom is infinite. The treasures of his grace are inexhaustible. It is conceivable that the sun, after the lapse of many and vast ages, may become dark and cold, or that the waters of old ocean may be drank up; but it is impossible and inconceivable that the infinite resources of our Divine Helper should ever fail. 2. *He is ever-available.* We cannot seek him and discover that he is inaccessible to us. We cannot approach him inopportunely. He is "a very present Help in trouble." "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." 3. *He is ever-gracious.* His willingness to help is as great and as constant as his ability. Man varies in his moods: to-day he is genial and kind, to-morrow he is cold and harsh. But God is ever merciful, ever disposed to help and bless his creatures.

III. THE BELIEVER'S ASSURANCE OF THE HELP OF GOD. "So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper; I will not fear: what shall man do unto me?" 1. *This confidence rests upon the promise of God.* "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (ver. 5). His promises are perfectly reliable. "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man," etc. (Numb. xxiii. 19). "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." "The Scripture cannot be broken." "He abideth faithful; for he cannot deny himself." His promise, then, is an immovable basis for our confidence. 2. *This confidence inspires the courage of the*

believer. "The Lord is my Helper; I will not fear: what shall man do unto me?" The man over whom God casts his shield is invulnerable. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" No crafty foe can elude the vigilance of his eye; no subtle scheme can surprise his infinite mind; no strong antagonist can cope with his almighty arm. If he is our Helper, man cannot injure us. If he is our Helper, our resources cannot fail. If he is our Helper, we may pursue our life-path chanting cheerfully, "God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in trouble," etc. (Ps. xlii.).—W. J.

Ver. 8.—*The unchangeableness of Jesus Christ.* "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." The Lord Jesus Christ is unchangeable—

I. IN HIS PERSON. "Our Lord's Godhead is the seat of his personality. The Son of Mary is not a distinct human person mysteriously linked with the Divine nature of the eternal Word. The Person of the Son of Mary is Divine and eternal. It is none other than the Person of the Word."¹ This personality is immutable. This has been already asserted by the writer of this Epistle: "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth," etc. (ch. i. 10—12). He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever" in his great attributes—his eternity, spirituality, omniscience, omnipotence, etc. He is the same in his perfect and blessed character—in his righteousness and faithfulness, his love and mercy, his forbearance and tenderness, etc. In this respect how vast is the difference between him and us! We are ever changing in many respects. Our outward appearances, the particles of which our bodies are composed, the opinions which we entertain, the experiences which we pass through, the characters which we are forming,—all these change. But he is sublimely unchangeable, eternally and infinitely perfect.

II. IN HIS WORD. The teaching of our Lord, like his personality, continues and changes not. His words are true, vital, suited to the conditions and needs of human nature and life. More than eighteen centuries have passed away since they were uttered; but they have lost none of their clearness, or freshness, or force. They are still the great fountains of religious light to our race. And the noblest human spirits still say to him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." It has been well said by Dr. Parker, "Plato's definitions are practically forgotten, but the Nazarene's words intermingle with universal civilization. A great composer said he was spending a long time over his work because he intended it to live long, but this Galilean peasant talks extemporaneously, as if simply answering the question of the hour; yet his words float over all generations, and are prized by men to-day as if they had been addressed exclusively to themselves. These 'sayings' are not local lamps, but suns set in the firmament commanding the range of all nations. . . . In Christ's 'sayings' there was always something beyond—a quickening sense that the words were but the surface of the thought; there was nothing to betoken conclusion, much less exhaustion; there was ever a luminous opening even on the clouds that lay deepest along the horizon, which invited the spectator to advance and behold yet fuller visions" ('Ecce Deus'). How different is the teaching of Jesus Christ from the changing opinions, speculations, and theories of men—even of distinguished men! Of every province of human thought and investigation we may truthfully say—

"Our little systems have their day;
They have their day, and cease to be."

But Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." "The Word of God liveth and abideth. . . . The Word of the Lord abideth for ever."

III. IN HIS WORK. Part of his great work was perfectly and splendidly accomplished while he was upon earth. The work which was given him to do upon earth, says Dr. Wardlaw, "was the expiation of human guilt, and the provision of a righteousness for the justification of the ungodly; the laying of the groundwork of man's redemption—the foundation on which might rest together the glory of God and the hopes of sinners. But his mediatorial work did not cease then. It does not properly terminate

¹ Dr. Liddon's 'Divinity of our Lord.'

till 'the end come,' when he shall have accomplished all the ends for which his office as Mediator had been assumed."

"He who for man their Surety stood,
And poured on earth his precious blood,
Pursues in heaven his mighty plan;
The Saviour and the Friend of man."

(Logan.)

Many of the miracles which he wrought when upon earth are illustrations, parables, of the work which he is ever performing in human spirits. 1. *As Saviour of sinners he is the same.* The cross upon which he gave himself in death for us has lost none of its ancient power. By his glorious gospel and his Holy Spirit he is still convincing men of sin, drawing them to himself, and imparting to them pardon and peace, liberty and joy. 2. *As the Helper of his people he is the same.* "He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (ch. vii. 25). "Christ's perpetual presentation of himself before the Father," says Canon Liddon, "is that which constitutes his intercession." He is in the presence of God as our Representative, our Advocate, and our Friend.

From the unchangeableness of Jesus Christ we infer: 1. *That he is essentially Divine.* All created beings change. This is one thing in which each and all of them are alike. We are different to-day from what we were yesterday, and to-morrow we shall differ from what we are to-day. Immutability belongs only to God (cf. ch. i. 10—12). 2. *That he is worthy of our utmost confidence.* If he were fickle, changeable in his character and purposes, loving man to-day and regarding him with indifference to-morrow, how could we trust him? Nay, if it were even possible for him to change, how could we calmly and confidently commit our souls to him? But seeing that he is what he is in his character and in his relation to us, and that he is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," we may repose in him the fullest confidence of our being. 3. *That the success of his cause is assured.* In the preceding verse we were reminded of the death of Christian ministers and elders; but the great Head of the Church ever liveth and is ever the same. "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged," etc. (Isa. xlii. 4).—W. J.

Ver. 10.—*The Christian altar.* "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat," etc. Here are three points which require notice.

I. *THE CHRISTIAN ALTAR.* "We have an altar." One of the positions which the writer of this Epistle endeavours to establish is this, that by the renunciation of Judaism these Hebrew Christians had not lost anything of real value, or that the good in Judaism was perfected in Christianity. He shows that in Jesus Christ, the Head of the Christian dispensation, they had One far greater than Moses, by whom the elder economy was given. For giving up the Levitical priesthood there was far more than compensation in the possession of an interest in the great High Priest. Moreover, the tabernacle in which our great High Priest appears for us is "greater and more perfect" than either the tabernacle in the wilderness or the temple at Jerusalem. And in our text he points out that Christians have also an altar with its provisions and blessings. By this altar we understand the cross upon which our Lord offered himself a Sacrifice for human sin.¹ 1. *On this altar the perfect Sacrifice was offered.* (We have already dealt with the perfection of Christ's sacrifice in our homilies on ch. x. 5—10, and 12, 13.) 2. *This altar has superseded all other altars.* The perfection of this sacrifice rendered its repetition unnecessary, and abolished for ever the imperfect and typical sacrifices of the earlier dispensation (cf. ch. vii. 27; x. 10—18).

II. *THE PROVISION WHICH THIS ALTAR FURNISHES.* The writer speaks of eating of this altar. The reference is to the fact that certain portions of some of the sacrifices under the Mosaic economy were eaten by the priests, and certain by the Levites also (cf. Lev. vi. 14—18, 24—30; vii.; Numb. xviii. 8—11; 1 Cor. ix. 13). The provision from the Christian altar is Jesus Christ himself, the great Sacrifice. By faith "we become partakers of Christ;" we appropriate him as the Life and the Sustenance of the soul. Our Lord said, "I am the living Bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever," etc. (John vi. 51—58). 1. *This provision is spiritual.* Not of the literal or material flesh and blood of Jesus do we eat and drink;

¹ For the various interpretations of this altar, see Alford, *in loco*.

but by faith we become partakers of his mind, his feelings, his principles, his spirit, his life, himself. Hence St. Paul writes, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," etc. (Gal. ii. 20). Again, "Christ our Life" (Col. iii. 3, 4). 2. *This provision is delightful.* To those who are healthy the eating of suitable provision is not only necessary and satisfying, but pleasurable. It gratifies the palate. The spiritual appropriation of Christ is joy-inspiring. In Christianity we have "a feast of fat things." 3. *This provision is free, and free to all.* Some of the Levitical sacrifices belonged to the sacrificing priest only, others only to the priest and Levites. But all may come to Christ by faith, and partake of the inestimable benefits of his 'great sacrifice.' "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," etc. (Isa. lv. 1, 2; Rev. xxii. 17).

III. THE EXCLUSION OF SOME FROM PARTICIPATION IN THIS PROVISION. "Whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." The reference is to the Jewish priests and Levites. They who clung to Judaism rejected Christianity, and were necessarily excluded from its benefits. They were self-excluded. They would not come unto Christ that they might have life. All who reject the Lord Jesus are in a similar condition: e.g. the self-righteous moralist, the modern representative of the ancient Pharisee; the captious and the scoffing sceptic; the worldling who elects to have his portion in this life; and others. The provision is free, free for all; but these exclude themselves from participation therein. How is it possible for any one to enjoy the blessings of Christianity who rejects the Christ?—W. J.

Vers. 15, 16.—*Acceptable sacrifices.* "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise," etc.

I. THE NATURE OF THE SACRIFICES WHICH ARE REQUIRED OF CHRISTIANS. 1. *Praise to God.* "Let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his Name." The sacrifices which are obligatory upon us are not expiatory or atoning, but eucharistic. The great atoning sacrifice in all its perfection has been offered. To it nothing can be added. But we should confess the Name of God, and gratefully acknowledge his great goodness to us, and celebrate his infinite perfections. Two things show our obligation to offer this sacrifice. (1) The number and preciousness of the blessings we receive from him. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? . . . I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving." "Bless the Lord, O my soul," etc. (Ps. ciii. 1—5). (2) The perfection and glory of his own being and character. We ought to bless God because of what he is in himself. "For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord?" etc. (Ps. lxxxix. 6, 7). "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts," etc. (Isa. vi. 3). 2. *Beneficence to man.* "But to do good and to communicate forget not." God requires not only "the fruit of our lips," but the fruit of our lives. Our gratitude to him is to be expressed in kindness to our fellow-men. "Thanksgiving is good, but thanks-living is better." Dr. South has well said, "The measures that God marks out to thy charity are these: thy superfluities must give place to thy neighbour's great convenience; thy convenience must yield to thy neighbour's necessity; and thy very necessities must yield to thy neighbour's extremity."

II. THE MEDIUM THROUGH WHICH THESE SACRIFICES SHOULD BE OFFERED. "By him let us offer," etc. More correctly, "through him let us offer." Our sacrifices should be offered through the mediation of Jesus Christ. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me," or, "through me." "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." We offer our sacrifices through him because: 1. *He represents God to us as accessible and attractive.* "No man knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him." "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." "The Father himself loveth you." Through this revelation we are encouraged to draw near to God with our thanksgiving and praise. 2. *He represents us to God in his own humanity.* "When he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." "Christ entered into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us." He is there still, bearing even in his glorified body the marks of the wounds which he endured for us. "A Lamb standing, as though it had been slain."

III. THE TIME WHEN THESE SACRIFICES SHOULD BE OFFERED. 1. *The sacrifice of praise to God should be offered "continually."* "Daily praise should ascend from each of us to God, as the perfume of the daily sacrifice ascended in olden times; there must not be fewer sacrifices under the new dispensation than there were under the old; we are priests to offer up unto God the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving." Praise should be not an occasional exercise, but an abiding disposition of the soul. We should cultivate a thankful, praiseful, adoring spirit. "In everything give thanks."

"Not thankful when it pleaseth me;
As if thy blessings had spare days:
But such a heart whose pulse may be
Thy praise."

(George Herbert.)

2. *The sacrifices of beneficence to men should be offered according to our opportunities.* "As we have opportunity, let us work that which is good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." Let us not neglect any opportunity of kindness and beneficence; for all our opportunities may soon be ended, and that for ever.

IV. THE FAVOUR WITH WHICH THESE SACRIFICES ARE REGARDED BY GOD. "With such sacrifices God is well pleased." He not only accepts them, but he is gratified by them. He is "well pleased" with them, because they are expressions of that spirit in which he delights. He is infinitely beneficent. He is "good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." "He is kind unto the unthankful, and to the evil." He loves to find the same disposition in his creatures. Moreover, our Lord regards our acts of beneficence as done to him (cf. Matt. xxv. 40). And not even the least of them escapes his notice, or will fail of its reward (cf. Matt. x. 42; ch. vi. 10).—W. J.

Vers. 20, 21.—*Concluding prayer and doxology.* "Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead," etc. (vers. 20, 21). Let us notice—

I. THE GREAT BEING WHO IS HERE ADDRESSED. "The God of peace." This title is fitly applied to the Most High. 1. *He is infinitely peaceful in himself.* All those elements which disturb and distress souls are entirely absent from his nature. Pride, anger, jealousy, remorse, fear, foreboding,—these are the things which agitate and alarm us; but they have no existence in him. He is infinitely pure and perfect, and, therefore, he is infinitely peaceful. 2. *He is the Giver of peace to others.* He gives peace in the conscience by means of the forgiveness of sin. "Thy sins are forgiven; . . . thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (Luke vii. 48, 50; cf. Rom. v. 1). He gives peace in the heart by the expulsion of evil passions therefrom and the inspiration therein of holy affections. Anger, revenge, jealousy, he expels from the heart, and he awakens in it supreme love to himself and love to our fellow-men. He quickens within us confidence in himself, and so gives us peace as we contemplate the possibilities of our future. A calm trust in his fatherhood is an unfailing antidote to our anxieties and forebodings. "Be not anxious for your life," etc. (Matt. vi. 25—34). He gives peace in the Church. There is, perhaps, an allusion to this fact in the present application of the title to him. The nineteenth verse suggests that there was danger of disobedience and insubordination amongst those who are addressed. And it was appropriate to remind them that God is the God of peace and the Giver of peace, and to wish for them the enjoyment of this blessing.

II. THE GREAT WORK ATTRIBUTED TO HIM. "Who brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus." We must notice here what is said of the Lord Jesus Christ. 1. *The relation which he sustains to his people.* "The great Shepherd of the sheep." This relationship implies (1) provision for the wants of his people. "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want," etc. (Ps. xxiii.). (2) Direction of their way. "The sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out," etc. (John x. 3, 4). (3) Protection of them from dangers and enemies. "I will save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey." "I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep," etc. (John x. 11—14; cf. Ezek. xxxiv. 11—31). 2. *The means by which he entered into his relationship.* "Through the blood of the eternal covenant." Jesus Christ became the great Shepherd of the sheep through

the great sacrifice of himself which he offered. Ebrard: "Christ is the great, true, chief, and superior Shepherd, inasmuch as he has made an everlasting covenant by his blood (cf. ch. x. 11, etc.). The best commentary on these words is found in John x. He is the good Shepherd because he has given his life for the sheep." This great Shepherd of the sheep was brought again from the dead by the God of peace. In the New Testament the resurrection of our Saviour is almost invariably attributed to God the Father. "God raised him from the dead, and gave him glory" (1 Pet. i. 21). Thus his resurrection was an evidence that the work which was given him to do upon earth was perfectly completed, and was accepted by the Divine Father.

III. THE BLESSING SOLICITED FROM HIM. "Make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ." Perfection is the blessing prayed for. 1. *The nature of this perfection.* "Make you perfect in every good thing to do his will." Absolute perfection is not solicited here; but that they may be enabled fully and heartily to accomplish the holy will of God. Cf. ch. x. 36, "That having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise." 2. *The means of this perfection.* "Working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight." To the same effect St. Paul writes, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure." The inspiration and strength for our out-working of his will must come from his in-working with us. 3. *The medium of this perfection.* "Through Jesus Christ." God works within us through the Saviour, through his mediation and by his Spirit. Through him alone can man attain unto perfection of being.

IV. THE HONOUR ASCRIBED TO HIM. "To whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen." 1. *Glory is ascribed to God the Father.* Some hold that the glory is attributed to Jesus Christ. But it seems to us that it is ascribed to God the Father, "the chief Subject of the whole sentence," as Alford says; "God, who is the God of peace, who brought up the Lord Jesus from the dead, who can perfect us in every good work, to accomplish his will, and works in us that which is well-pleasing to him through Jesus Christ. The whole majesty of the sentence requires this reverting to its main Agent, and speaks against the referring 'to whom be the glory' to our blessed Lord, who is only incidentally mentioned." To the God of all grace the highest, fullest, divinest honours are due. 2. *Glory is ascribed to God perpetually.* "For ever and ever." "Unto the ages of the ages. Amen." His own essential glory is eternal, and the honours attributed to him will not only continue, but increase throughout endless ages.—W. J.

Ver. 1.—*Brotherly love.* I. ESPECIALLY NECESSARY AT THE PRESENT SEASON. It was a time of trial from outside. Brothers needed to be brotherly, helping one another. We cannot expect anything from strangers, and must be ready even for their hostility. But we must do everything to guard against alienation amongst friends at a time when the closest union will be serviceable.

II. THE COUNSEL NECESSARY BECAUSE SELF-REGARD IS SUCH A SUPTLE SIN. Carnal views of the kingdom of heaven, such as seem to have been prevalent among these Hebrew Christians, inevitably led to each one of them thinking what in the expected glorious state of things he would get for himself. So it was among the disciples of Jesus. They disputed who should be greatest. There was even intrigue to get a promise of the principal places. Christians need to be ever on their guard lest any feeling get dominion in their hearts hostile to the good of the whole body.

III. WE ARE REMINDED OF ABIDING THINGS THAT DEPEND ON OUR OWN DISPOSITION. The writer has just been referring to things that can be shaken and removed, and things that cannot be shaken. These are things that God deals with by his power. But the continuance of some things depends on whether we will have them continue. Whether brotherliness shall be a deep and abiding thing depends on the state of our hearts.

IV. CONTINUAL REMEMBRANCE OF THE REAL RELATION OF EVERY CHRISTIAN TO EVERY OTHER CHRISTIAN. By the same Spirit we are all born again, and therefore members of the same Divine family. Each of us, therefore, is under certain obligations; each of us may prefer certain claims. But there can be no proper treatment either of

the obligations or the claims unless there be real affection underneath. It is in the spiritual sphere as in the natural; the mere relation may only irritate unless there be the feelings that properly belong to the relation.—Y.

Ver. 2.—*Hospitality.* Note the connection of vers. 1 and 2. First *φιλὰδελφία* is enjoined, then *φιλότης*. The stranger as well as the brother must have a proper place in our consideration. Brotherliness must not lead to exclusiveness. We must go by the golden rule. If we came to a strange place at nightfall, footsore with a long day's walking, we should be very grateful to any who would open the door and give us shelter and food. The injunction to hospitality very needful in times when facilities of travel were not what they are now. Hospitable feelings are strong in many who have not yet attained to Christian virtues; let the Christian, then, be in no way behind. He will be prudent and cautious in his treatment of strangers, he will be wise as the serpent; but he will remember, too, that he is under the protection of God. Now and then he will be deceived and robbed, but this is a little matter compared with the maintenance of hospitable duties. It may seem at first as if a low motive for hospitality were here introduced; but if it be considered, we shall see that it is not so much a motive to hospitality as to unremitting watchfulness in hospitality. Let the stranger be ever in your mind. Let not one slip past your gates, or go away knocking in vain. What will it avail to admit a thousand who bring you nothing but their needs, if you let the one go who will bring you blessings far more than anything you can do for him?—Y.

Ver. 3.—*Sufferers to be remembered.* I. THOSE IN BONDS. Doubtless those in bonds for Christ and conscience' sake. In the worst of persecuting times there seems to have been a body of Christians suffering nothing, or comparatively little. Some, in bonds, have preached all the more effectively; others have continued free to make known the gospel far and wide. This admonition becoming ever less needful so far as literal imprisonment for Christ's sake is concerned. But still we must bear in mind the admonition, so far as the essence of it is concerned. For the persecuting spirit of the world remains; the world persecutes, not meaning to persecute; does not know all the suffering it inflicts. We must be quick to discover all sufferers for conscience' sake, and intercede for them. Then let the exhortation also include those in bonds as evil-doers. Of such, alas! there is still abundance. Civilization is not able to do without the prison. Let us consider that in less favourable circumstances we also might have been criminals. Let Christians be forward in all that tries to prevent the child growing into a criminal manhood, and the liberated criminal lapsing again into evil ways. "Put yourself in his place," and so let your heart go out in pity and effort for the vilest of mankind.

II. THEM WHICH SUFFER ADVERSITY. All that a man can suffer because he is in the body—let that draw out your pity and help. Here, again, no doubt, the primary reference is to a state of things that has largely passed away. Christians had to suffer physical violence. This was a readier and cheaper way of venting hatred against them than putting them in prison. The fist and the cudgel are soon got in action. And here again, too, let the exhortation pass far beyond the limits of its first occasion. You are in the body, and can suffer pain through the senses; and what *you can* suffer, many actually do suffer.

III. THE MEANING OF THE REMEMBRANCE. Merely to remember would do no good. The remembrance must be so constant, so burdensome, as to make you act. There is a kind of reproach in the word; it implies that we only too easily forget the prisoner and the oppressed.—Y.

Ver. 5.—*The love of money.* No body of the most important precepts for practical Christian life can be without some admonition bearing on the proper use of money. Money, with all it represents, has a most insidious and potent charm for the great majority of men. Even in times of trial and persecution this spiritual peril has to be remembered. A man may become so deluded by external possessions that the risk of losing them may lead him to apostasy. Money must not be allowed to become the great centre of attraction, the controller of our life's orbit, else how shall we be properly influenced by nobler things? Distinguish, of course, between the possession of money and the love of

money. There may be possession of much wealth with no love of it, and there may be very little in actual possession with a most intense desire after it. The writer indicates two reasons especially for guarding against love of money. 1. There can be no contentment along with this love. The Christian is to attain his true contentment in that which becomes an integral part of his own life. 2. There can be no honouring trust in God. God has said, "I will not leave thee," yet every act of the money-loving man expresses doubt on this point.—Y.

Ver. 7.—*Treatment of the leaders.* In properly treating all Christian leaders and rulers four acts are enjoined, coming in a regular and appropriate sequence.

I. LISTENING. These men lead and rule because they speak the Word of God. If they spoke their own word then it would not be right to follow them. And because they speak the Word of God we have no choice but to listen. The writer has just been quoting a word of God intended to guard against a great spiritual peril—the love of money. All who really speak the Word of God are to be reckoned as our leaders, Jesus himself in the very front, giving in his own words a sure test whereby every other word is to be tried.

II. REMEMBERING. All instructions and promises must be at hand in the mind when they are wanted. Spoken before being wanted, they were ready when the want came. Hence the value of regularly and penetratively reading the New Testament. We cannot go far anywhere in it without coming across the most profitable directions for our daily life.

III. STUDYING THE EXPERIENCE OF THE LEADERS. As they spoke they acted. The Word of God they pressed on others they first of all believed themselves. There was no inculcated duty in which they did not lead by practice as well as by precept. Some of these leaders, at least, had now passed beyond the vicissitudes of earth. Their whole Christian life was open to observation. Results could be seen. Take a life, for instance, like that of Stephen, consummated by a revelation of glory and reward such as might well inspire any follower. And especially the *faith* of the leaders is to be studied. Examine the true riches that have come to men by trusting in God.

IV. IMITATING THEM, or rather imitating one particular thing in them—their faith. We are no real followers of any Christian leader unless we do this. It is not peculiarities in a man's teaching, commanding influence of a personality, that should make him a leader. It is the reality of his faith in God. Such a leader we follow most and honour most when his example makes us as true believers as himself.—Y.

Ver. 8.—*The unchanging Jesus.* I. THE NEEDS OF MEN DO NOT CHANGE. No doubt there is change and progress in some respects. Each generation of the human race, like each succeeding wave when the tide is flowing, is an advance on the generation going before it. As the world grows older this advance is more marked. Our fathers travelled in stage-coaches, we by express trains; they had to wait weeks for the answer of a letter, we have the telegraph to bring the same answer in an hour. But all these changes, however impressive, are only on the surface of life. Our nature has not changed. It wants the same ministries, though they may come in a different way. Though each wave is an advance on the preceding wave, they are all composed of the same elements. We who travel in railway trains are exactly the same sort of beings as those who rode in stage-coaches. The great facts of existence are the same—birth and death, sin and sorrow, hope and fear. A picture is not altered because you put it in a different frame. Man is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.

II. THE SERVICE OF CHRIST DOES NOT CHANGE. Let the words be taken as true of Christ in his relation to us, that relation arising out of his life among men in the flesh. He has come into special relations to us, and it is in those special relations that we have to consider him as "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." He came to this world to do a work for all generations. As to us, the closer we keep to the evident and pressing wants of our generation, the better work we shall do. We know not the wants of posterity, and therefore we had better leave it to look after its own wants. But Jesus in his brief life did a work for the whole world—for all who ever have lived or will live on the broad surface of the earth. Because there are sinners still, Christ is still a Saviour. The world is still full of Pharisees and Sadducees, publicans and

harlots, sinners of every type and shade; full of the sick and the sorrowing; full of women like the widow of Nain and the sisters of Lazarus, weeping for their departed kindred.

III. NO CHANGE IN THE THINGS TO BE SAID ABOUT CHRIST. Do not be carried away, says the writer of the Epistle, with new doctrines concerning Christ, however attractive and plausible. Let us ever remind ourselves of what Christ has been in the great yesterday. Especially let us consider that yesterday which is revealed to us in the Scriptures of the New Testament. If that day was not a dream of the imagination, then it is one of the most glorious of soul-supporting realities. Jesus justified the name he bore, for he did indeed save his people from their sins. The yesterday of which we are now able to speak is a long one. It has known many changes in the world, but none in Jesus Christ.

IV. NO CHANGE IN THE FUTURE. The world will not change in its need of him. They are certainly wrong who tell us the religion of Christ has seen its best days. Look at the future in the light of the past, and you will be assured of your Saviour ever standing in the midst of the golden candlesticks, watching that their light goes not out. We may change in our faith and hope and patience, but Christ changes not. Rising to the measure of our duties and opportunities, this would become a practical truth to us. We are not straitened in him, but in ourselves. He asks to let him do for us what he has done for those going before. He asks for admission. Let the door no longer be locked with the key of unbelief and double bolted with indolence and worldliness. Let us not go from the world without leaving a testimony that shall if possible have a savour of life unto life to those following in our steps.—Y.

Ver. 14.—*The continuing city.* The two previous verses express, in a thoroughly Hebraistic way, an invitation to be crucified together with Christ. At the same time, these Hebrew Christians are reminded of the wilderness and tent life which their forefathers led for forty years. What they experienced in the outward reality let us experience by the inward spirit. We belong to the future more than to the present.

I. OUR VIEW OF PRESENT SURROUNDINGS. We have cities, but not continuing ones. It would be very foolish in us, knowing all we do and hoping for all we do, to look upon the states and governments of this world as do those in whom nationality is the very strongest feeling. We must pray to be preserved from that narrow and one-sided idealism which so glorifies fatherland as to make it the chief object of one's enthusiasm and effort. Our hearts must not be deceived by the outward splendours of capital cities. And yet, while the pilgrim spirit is in us, let it not be a restless and a carping one. No one should be more interested in the life, prosperity, and good government of a state than the Christian.

II. OUR OUTLOOK TOWARDS THE FUTURE. An abiding city, a city where there is true stability and true glory, is no dream. We have it not yet, but we shall have it if we seek for it. What an interest the Christian is exhorted to have in abiding, continuing things! Faith, hope, and love are to abide; all abiding things will be manifested after the great shaking; and they will cohere into the true dignity of the heavenly state. Never has the human imagination been more nobly employed than in bodying forth the conditions and appearances of a perfect state. But those indulging such imaginations had no definite way of reducing them to fact. Here, however, the Christian is spoken of as seeking for the coming city in a very definite way. True, our present life is as it were a camp-life, but not for all that like the life of savage or gipsy. Our camping-places are all stages in the journey to the new Jerusalem.—Y.

Vers. 15, 16.—*The sacrifices with which God is well pleased.* Vain is any attempt of ours to take in the full significance of this exhortation. We have not to turn away from any literal altar or any literal sacrifice. But the injunctions in themselves, apart from the special aspect of them, are permanently important.

I. OUR CONSTANT AIM MUST BE TO PLEASE GOD. Literal sacrifices had degenerated into a traditional safeguard against displeasing God. The ordinances of Sinai with respect to sacrifice had aimed to lift it into a great teaching and self-revealing institution. But probably only a few in every generation had grasped the spiritual significance of sacrifice. Though, doubtless, many too, because their motive was sincere as far

as it went, were accepted, as was the woman with her alabaster box, and the widow with the two mites. The illuminating gospel of Christ leaves us without excuse as to what will please God. We know that the old sacrifices never could have pleased him in themselves. He could not eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats. But now no offering can please unless it be in itself helpful to men or glorifying to God.

II. INTELLIGENT PRAISE PLEASES GOD. Praise which comes from overflowing heart-experiences must always be acceptable to God. For the fruits from outward possessions are substituted the fruits from an inward life. The habitual acknowledgment of God's Name means an habitual consciousness of all the services he renders in supplying all our needs from the highest down to the lowest. It is not enough that there be praise; it must be praise abounding in the right elements. Mere words of the lip can give no more pleasure to God than the mere slaying of animals.

III. THE DOING OF GOOD PLEASES GOD. Praise cannot stand by itself. Real doing of good shows that God's Spirit of love, direction, and power is working in us. Work must not stand instead of praise, nor praise instead of work; going together, they are as the sacrificial body and the smell proceeding from it. Note the significant injunction not to forget. How much easier it is to go through a round of praise than to muster the self-denial needed for a course of practical good!

IV. FELLOWSHIP PLEASES GOD. Christians must associate. Real Christians coming together cannot but associate. God delights in the process of mutual giving and receiving observable in every Christian community. Making up for each other's defects, bearing each other's burdens, having fellowship as the eye has with the hand, the head with the feet, let this be the sight God ever sees when he looks upon his people. So shall the carcasses of all beasts slain in sacrifice be glorified when we think of the real offerings which they typified, and towards which they in some manner prepared.—Y.

Ver. 17.—*The watchful leaders.* Under the details of this exhortation there seems to lie a reference to the shepherding of sheep. The shepherd goes before his sheep, leading them out and in, and finding pasture. This reference made probable by the further reference in ver. 20. Consider, then—

I. THE SHEPHERD'S AUTHORITY. Christians must maintain the liberty wherewith Christ hath set them free, but at the same time there is a discipline also to be maintained, a provision and protection to be accepted. Few are the Christians who can do without counsel, comfort, and spiritual supply from those who in various ways are qualified to give these. We must look for the shepherd ability and tenderness wherever we can find it. Those formally constituted shepherds may have very few of the qualifications. Let intrinsic authority be recognized; more than that, let it be looked for. It is quite possible to be the shepherd in relation to certain fellow-Christians and the sheep in relations to others.

II. THE SHEPHERD'S FIDELITY. He remembers that he has to give account. If any of the sheep be lost or slain he has to explain how it happened, and show that the blame did not lie with him. This makes a true shepherd ever vigilant and foreseeing, always ready to suspect danger under an appearance of the greatest safety.

III. THE SHEPHERD'S DIFFICULTY. The literal shepherd has difficulties enough. He has to do with stupid sheep who have to be watched continually. But, then, he can always employ main force. The spiritual shepherd, on the other hand, deals with human beings. They have to be persuaded. If they are bent on going into pastureless and dangerous places, then the shepherd cannot stop. He warns, he expostulates, he entreats, with tears in his eyes, again and again; and that is all he can do. Hence the need of appeal to those who add the responsibility of a human being to the helplessness of the sheep.

IV. THE SHEPHERD'S ACCOUNT. The faithful shepherd can keep the day of account before him, with a calm and ready heart. He can justify himself for every sheep committed to his trust. But all this will not prevent him bewailing the sheep that are lost. Every one with the shepherd instinct in him will think with deepest sorrow of those who would listen to no counsel and believe in no peril.

V. THE SHEPHERD'S REWARD. He is rewarded according to his faithfulness. He may have to present a most deplorable list of lost sheep; but if he can show that no blame is his—that every one has been lost purely through self-will—then his profiting will

appear all the same. The shepherd will have sorrow for a season, but he cannot suffer in the end. The sole suffering and loss remain in the end with those who reject the counsels.—Y.

Vers. 18, 19.—*A request for prayer.* Here is a new and unexpected relation between the shepherd and the sheep; for as a shepherd the author of this Epistle must be viewed, whoever he may be. The shepherd instinct, striving to guard Christians from error and backsliding, is manifest in every page. But while there is authority, the authority of one who sees with a clear eye right into truth, there is also, as expressed in this request, a most touching sense of need. The guiding and comforting of Christians is an awful burden. To be in any way charged with the diffusion and enforcement of the truth keeps the heart continually on the strain. There are so many things to say, so little time in which to say them, and such lack of the best words, as makes one say, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Hence the earnestness with which one who is busy from the heart in working for Christ asks for the intercession of others. Only a man himself knowing the power of prayer could utter such a request. A prayerless man will never have an inward impulse prompting him to say, "Pray for us." Note where this request comes in—just at the end of the Epistle. As if the writer intended his friends to feel that he would first of all do all he could for them before he asked anything from them. If indeed they had profited by his instructions then, both intellectually and spiritually, they would be in the fittest mood to pray for him.—Y.

Vers. 20, 21.—*A most comprehensive wish.* This is both a wish and a prayer. None the less a prayer because referring to God in the third person. The writer both prays that God may prosecute a course of operations in the hearts of these Christians, and indirectly solicits them at the same time to make this course possible by their submission and co-operation. This prayer-wish, it will be noted, was peculiarly correspondent with the position of Hebrew Christians.

I. THE REFERENCE TO THE COVENANT. There had been a covenant, not everlasting, seeing there was no possibility of everlastingness in it. But now there is a new covenant, stable and consecrated by the blood of Jesus himself. The very Lord's Supper, in which these Hebrew Christians must repeatedly have taken part, made it impossible for them to forget the blood of the new covenant. This new covenant was really established in the raising of Jesus from the dead. And well might God be called a God of peace in connection with it. As God of the old covenant he had too frequently to be a God of wrath and of hostility to those transgressing the terms of the covenant.

II. THE COMFORTING REFERENCE TO GOD'S POWER AND DISPOSITION. Great as the troubles through which these people were passing seemed, yet they were not as the troubles of ancient Israel, idolatrous and apostate from the living God. It is a matter of the greatest importance to be assured that one is not contending with the Divine wrath. If God be against us, all comforts and hopes, however promising, are only delusions. But here is the proof that God is for us, in raising Jesus from the dead. Jesus had been the great Benefactor of men, a true Shepherd. Had he not compassion on the crowd, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd? And when he died, how many lost their hope and comfort then! But God raises him from the dead, brings him back from among the corpses, and so constitutes him in a higher sense than ever the great Shepherd of the sheep.

III. THE GREAT THINGS YET TO BE EXPECTED AND PREPARED FOR. A risen Saviour is not only to secure us immortality, but to confirm us in a new life in every way. Things are prayed for that belong to the very essence of the Christian life, whatever its external circumstances may be. We need to be properly placed and endowed for every good work; we need to be fitted to carry out the will of God. The Divine intent is that we should in all ways be strong for usefulness as well as strong to bear trial. The God of the resurrection can work in us all that is acceptable to himself, and he will do it through Jesus Christ.

IV. THE DOXOLOGY. How fittingly it comes in after this recital of the Divine power and ability! All true praise must be based upon a real and deep apprehension of the grace of God in Christ Jesus.—Y.

Ver. 22.—*Suffering the word of exhortation.* The writer wishes to be prepared for every state of mind in those to whom he writes. He knows very well that much of what he has said will not be welcome upon the first reading of it. He may seem not to be sufficiently sympathetic, not sufficiently alive to the present troubles of others. More than that, in the midst of their troubles he calls them to exercises of thought and feeling which run counter to old hopes and old associations. And now, in conclusion, he lets them know how he quite understands their attitude of mind towards his letter. He does not expect his exhortations to commend themselves at first. But, knowing the word of truth to be in them, he knows they will guide his friends to higher duties and higher hopes, if only they will consider them. Thus he shows at the same time regard for the feelings of his friends, and anxiety that truth may not be repelled because at first it does not look serviceable.—Y.

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